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BENJAMIN DISRAELI
EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

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BIOGRAPHY, SHORT STORIES
AND GREAT SPEECHES
WITH
A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION BY
EDMUND GOSSE, LL.D.,
LIBRARIAN TO THE
HOUSE OF LORDS.
AND
A BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE BY
ROBERT ARNOT, M.A.

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AFTER AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY FREDERICK MORGAN.

'Can you dance, little Count?'

(See page 83.)

CONTARINI FLEMING

A PSYCHOLOGICAL ROMANCE

BY

BENJAMIN DISRAELI
EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

VOLUME I.

M. WALTER DUNNE
NEW YORK AND LONDON

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE author proposed to himself, in writing this work, a subject that has ever been held one of the most difficult and refined, and which is virgin in the imaginative literature of every country — namely, the development and formation of the poetic character. It has, indeed, been sometimes incidentally treated and partially illustrated by writers of the highest class, as for instance Goethe in his 'Wilhelm Meister,' where are expounded, with so much felicity, the mysteries of predisposition; and the same illustrious author has, in his capricious memoirs, favoured us with much of his individual experience of self-formation — in this resembling preceding poets, none more conspicuously than Count Alfieri. But an ideal and complete picture of the development of the poet had not been produced, nor had any one entirely grappled with the thorough formation of that mysterious character with which, though unlike all of us, we all of us so strangely sympathise.

When the author meditated over the entireness of the subject, it appeared to him that the auto-biographical form was the necessary condition of a successful fulfilment. It seemed the only instrument that

could penetrate the innermost secrets of the brain and heart in a being whose thought and passion were so much cherished in loneliness, and revealed often only in solitude. In the earlier stages of the theme the self-discoverer seemed an indispensable agent. What narrative by a third person could sufficiently paint the melancholy and brooding childhood, the first indications of the predisposition, the growing consciousness of power, the reveries, the loneliness, the doubts, the moody misery, the ignorance of art, the failures, the despair?

Having adopted this conclusion, the author then endeavoured to conceive a character whose position in life should be at variance, and, as it were, in constant conflict with his temperament; the accidents of whose birth, nevertheless, tended to develop his psychology. The combination that connected in one being Scandinavia and the South, and made the image of a distant and most romantic city continually act upon a nervous temperament, surrounded by the snows and forests of the North, though novel, it is believed, in literature, was by no means an impossible or even improbable one.

Pursuing an analogous construction, it was resolved that the first great passion of the poet, the one that would give a colour to the life of such an individual, should arise out of the same circumstance; and in harmony, it is thought, with an organisation of a susceptibility so peculiar, this critical passage in his life is founded upon the extreme mysteries of sympathy, and carried on by the influences of animal magnetism.

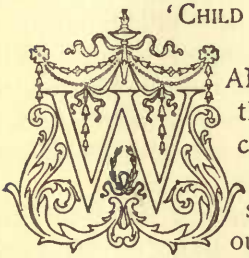
This book, written with great care, after deep meditation, and in a beautiful and distant land favourable to composition, with nothing in it to attract the passions of the hour, was published anonymously in the midst of a revolution (1831–2); and it seemed that it must die. But gradually it has gained the sympathy of the thoughtful and the refined, and it has had the rare fortune of being cherished by great men. Now it is offered to a new generation, and bears the name of its author, because, on critically examining it, he finds that, though written in early youth, it has accomplished his idea. Were he equal to his subject, the book would last, for that subject is eternal.

GROSVENOR GATE:
July, 1845.

CONTARINI FLEMING

CHAPTER I.

'CHILD OF NATURE, LEARN TO UNLEARN!'



ANDERING in those deserts of Africa that border the Erythræan Sea, I came to the river Nile, to that ancient, and mighty, and famous stream, whose waters yielded us our earliest civilisation, and which, after having witnessed the formation of so many states and the invention of so many creeds, still flow on with the same serene beneficence, like all that we can conceive of Deity; in form sublime, in action systematic; in nature bountiful, in source unknown.

My solitary step sounded in the halls of the Pharaohs. I moved through those imperial chambers supported by a thousand columns, and guarded by colossal forms seated on mysterious thrones. I passed under glittering gates, meet to receive the triumphant chariot of a Titan: I gazed on sublime obelisks pointing to the skies, whose secrets their mystic characters affected to conceal. Wherever I threw my sight I beheld vast avenues of solemn sphinxes reposing in

supernatural beauty, and melancholy groups of lion-visaged kings; huge walls vividly pictured with the sacred rites and the domestic offices of remote antiquity, or sculptured with the breathing forms of heroic warfare.

And all this might, all this magnificence, all this mystery, all this beauty, all this labour, all this high invention,—where were their originators? I fell into deep musing. And the kingdoms of the earth passed before me, from the thrones of the Pharaohs to those enormous dominations that sprang out of the feudal chaos, the unlawful children of ignorance and expediency. And I surveyed the generations of man from Rameses the great, and Memnon the beautiful, to the solitary pilgrim, whose presence now violated the sanctity of their gorgeous sepulchres. And I found that the history of my race was but one tale of rapid destruction or gradual decay.

And in the anguish of my heart, I lifted up my hands to the blue æther, and I said, 'Is there no hope! What is knowledge, and what is truth? How shall I gain wisdom?'

The wind arose, the bosom of the desert heaved, pillars of sand sprang from the earth and whirled across the plain; sounds more awful than thunder came rushing from the south; the fane and the palace, the portal and the obelisk, the altar and the throne, the picture and the frieze, disappeared from my sight, and darkness brooded over the land. I knelt down and hid my face in the moveable and burning soil, and as the wind of the desert passed over me, methought it whispered, 'Child of Nature, learn to unlearn!'

We are the slaves of false knowledge. Our memories are filled with ideas that have no origin in truth.

We learn nothing from ourselves. The sum of our experience is but a dim dream of the conduct of past generations, generations that lived in a total ignorance of their nature. Our instructors are the unknowing and the dead. We study human nature in a charnel-house, and, like the nations of the East, we pay divine honours to the maniac and the fool. A series of systems have mystified existence. We believe what our fathers credited, because they were convinced without a cause. The faculty of thought has been destroyed. Yet our emasculated minds, without the power of fruition, still pant for the charms of wisdom. It is this that makes us fly with rapture to false knowledge, to tradition, to prejudice, to custom. Delusive tradition, destructive prejudice, degenerating custom! It is this that makes us prostrate ourselves with reverence before the wisdom of bygone ages, in no one of which has man been the master of his own reason.

I am desirous of writing a book which shall be all truth: a work of which the passion, the thought, the action, and even the style, should spring from my own experience of feeling, from the meditations of my own intellect, from my own observation of incident, from my own study of the genius of expression.

When I turn over the pages of the metaphysician, I perceive a science that deals in words instead of facts. Arbitrary axioms lead to results that violate reason; imaginary principles establish systems that contradict the common sense of mankind. All is dogma, no part demonstration. Wearied, perplexed, doubtful, I throw down the volume in disgust.

When I search into my own breast, and trace the development of my own intellect, and the formation

of my own character, all is light and order. The luminous succeeds to the obscure, the certain to the doubtful, the intelligent to the illogical, the practical to the impossible, and I experience all that refined and ennobling satisfaction that we derive from the discovery of truth, and the contemplation of nature.

I have resolved, therefore, to write the history of my own life, because it is the subject of which I have the truest knowledge.

At an age when some have scarcely entered upon their career, I can look back upon past years spent in versatile adventure and long meditation. My thought has been the consequence of my organisation: my action the result of a necessity not less imperious. My fortune and my intelligence have blended together, and formed my character.

I am desirous of executing this purpose while my brain is still fed by the ardent, though tempered, flame of youth; while I can recall the past with accuracy, and record it with vividness; while my memory is still faithful, and while the dewy freshness of youthful fancy still lingers on my mind.

I would bring to this work the illumination of an intellect emancipated from the fatal prejudices of an irrational education. This may be denied me. Yet some exemption from the sectarian prejudices that embitter life may surely be expected from one who, by a curious combination of circumstances, finds himself without country, without kindred, and without friends; nor will he be suspected of indulging in the delusion of worldly vanity, who, having acted in the world, has retired to meditate in an inviolate solitude, and seeks relief from the overwhelming vitality of thought in the flowing spirit of poetic creation.

CHAPTER II.

A Lonely Childhood.

HEN I can first recall existence, I remember myself a melancholy child. My father, Baron Fleming, was a Saxon nobleman of ancient family, who, being opposed to the French interest, quitted his country at the commencement of this century, and after leading for some years a wandering life, entered into the service of a northern court. At Venice, yet a youth, he married a daughter of the noble house of Contarini, and of that marriage I was the only offspring. My entrance into this world was marked with evil, for my mother yielded up her life while investing me with mine. I was christened with the name of her illustrious race. Thus much during the first years of my childhood I casually learnt, but I know not how. I feel I was early conscious that my birth was a subject on which it was proper that I should not speak, and one, the mention of which, it was early instilled into me, would only occasion my remaining parent bitter sorrow. Therefore upon this topic I was ever silent, and with me, from my earliest recollection, Venice was a name to be shunned.

My father again married. His new bride was a daughter of the country which had adopted him. She was of high blood, and very wealthy, and beautiful in the fashion of her land. This union produced two children, both males. As a child, I viewed them with passive antipathy. They were called my brothers, but Nature gave the lie to the reiterated assertion. There was no similitude between us. Their blue eyes, their flaxen hair, and their white visages claimed no kindred with my Venetian countenance. Wherever I moved I looked around me, and beheld a race different from myself. There was no sympathy between my frame and the rigid clime whither I had been brought to live. I knew not why, but I was unhappy. Had I found in one of my father's new children a sister, all might have been changed. In that sweet and singular tie I might have discovered solace, and the variance of constitution would perhaps between different sexes have fostered, rather than discouraged, affection. But this blessing was denied me. I was alone.

I loved my father dearly and deeply, but I seldom saw him. He was buried in the depth of affairs. A hurried kiss and a passing smile were the fleeting gifts of his affection. Scrupulous care, however, was taken that I should never be, and should never feel, neglected. I was overloaded with attentions, even as an infant. My stepmother, swayed by my father, and perhaps by a well-regulated mind, was vigilant in not violating the etiquette of maternal duty. No favour was shown to my white brethren which was not extended also to me. To me also, as the eldest, the preference, if necessary, was ever yielded. But for the rest, she was cold and I was repulsive, and she stole

from the saloon, which I rendered interesting by no infantile graces, to the nursery, where she could lavish her love upon her troublesome but sympathising offspring, and listen to the wondrous chronicle, which their attendants daily supplied, of their marvellous deeds and almost oracular prattle.

Because I was unhappy I was sedentary and silent, for the lively sounds and the wild gambols of children are but the unconscious outpouring of joy. They make their gay noises, and burst into their gay freaks, as young birds in spring chant in the free air, and flutter in the fresh boughs. But I could not revel in the rushing flow of my new blood, nor yield up my frame to its dashing and voluptuous course. I could not yet analyse my feelings; I could not, indeed, yet think; but I had an instinct that I was different from my fellow-creatures, and the feeling was not triumph, but horror.

My quiet inaction gained me the reputation of stupidity. In vain they endeavoured to conceal from me their impression. I read it in their looks, in their glances of pity full of learned discernment, in their telegraphic exchanges of mutual conviction. At last, in a moment of irritation, the secret broke from one of my white brothers. I felt that the urchin spoke truth, but I cut him to the ground. He ran howling and yelping to his dam. I was surrounded by the indignant mother and the domestic police. I listened to their agitated accusations and palpitating threats of punishment with sullen indifference. I offered no defence. I courted their vengeance; it came in the shape of imprisonment. I was conducted to my room, and my door was locked on the outside. I answered the malignant sound by bolting it in the

interior. I remained there the whole day, deaf to all their entreaties, without sustenance, feeding only upon my vengeance. Each fresh visit was an additional triumph. I never answered; I never moved. Demands of apology were exchanged for promises of pardon; promises of pardon were in turn succeeded by offers of reward. I gave no sign. I heard them stealing on tiptoe to the portal, full of alarm, and even doubtful of my life. Scarcely would I breathe. At length the door was burst open, and in rushed the half-fainting Baroness and a posse of servants, with the children clinging to their nurses' gowns. Planted in a distant corner, I received them with a grim smile. I was invited away. I refused to move. A man-servant advanced and touched me. I stamped; I gnashed my teeth; I gave a savage growl that made him recoil with dread. The Baroness lost her remaining presence of mind, withdrew with her train, and was obliged to call in my father, to whom all was for the first time communicated.

I heard his well-known steps upon the stair. I beheld the face that never looked upon me without a smile; if in carelessness, still, still a smile. Now it was grave, but sad, not harsh.

'Contarini,' he said, in a serious but not angered voice, 'what is all this?'

I burst into a wild cry; I rushed to his arms. He pressed me to his bosom. He tried to kiss away the flooding tears that each embrace called forth more plenteously. For the first time in my life I felt happy, because, for the first time in my life, I felt loved.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIANA.

IT WAS a beautiful garden, full of terraces and arched walks of bowery trees. A tall fountain sprang up from a marble basin, and its glittering column broke in its fall into a thousand coloured drops, and woke the gleamy fish that would have slept in the dim water. And I wandered about, and the enchanted region seemed illimitable, and at each turn more magical and more bright. Now a white vase shining in the light, now a dim statue shadowed in a cool grot. I would have lingered a moment at the mossy hermitage, but the distant bridge seemed to invite me to new adventures.

It was only three miles from the city, and belonged to the aunt of the Baroness. I was brought hither to play. When the women met there was much kissing, and I also was kissed, but it gave me no pleasure, for I felt even then that it was a form, and I early imbibed a hatred of all this mechanical domestic love. And they sat together, and took out their work, and talked without ceasing, chiefly about the children. The Baroness retold all the wonderful

stories of the nurses, many of which I knew to be false. I did not say this, but the conviction gave me, thus early, a contempt for the chatter of women. So soon as I was unobserved I stole away to the garden.

Even then it was ravishing to be alone; and although I could not think, and knew not the cause of the change, I felt serene, and the darkness of my humour seemed to leave me, all was so new and all so beautiful. The bright sweet flowers, and the rich shrubs, and the tall trees, and the flitting birds, and the golden bees, and the gay butterflies, and that constant and soothing hum broken only ever and anon by a strange shrill call, and that wonderful blending of brilliancy, and freshness, and perfume, and warmth, that strong sense of the loveliness and vitality of Nature which we feel amid the growing life of a fair garden,—entered into my soul, and diffused themselves over my frame, softened my heart, and charmed my senses.

But all this was not alone the cause of my happiness; for to me the garden was not a piece of earth belonging to my aunt, but a fine world. I wandered about in quest of some strange adventure, which I would fain believe, in so fair a region, must quickly occur. The terrace was a vast desert, over which I travelled for many days; and the mazy walks, so mysterious and unworldly, were an unexplored forest fit for a true knight. And in the hermitage I sought the simple hospitality of a mild and aged host, who pointed to the far bridge as surely leading to a great fulfilment; and my companion was a faithful esquire, whose fidelity was never wanting, and we conversed much, but most respecting a mighty ogre who was

to fall beneath my puissant arm. Thus glided many a day in unconscious and creative reverie; but sometimes, when I had explored over and over again each nook and corner, and the illimitable feeling had worn off, the power of imagination grew weak; I found myself alone amid the sweets and sunshine, and felt sad.

But I would not quit this delicious world without an effort, and I invented a new mode of mingling in its life. I reclined beneath a shady tree, and I covered my eyes with my little hand, and I tried to shut out the garish light that seemed to destroy the visions which were ever flitting before me. They came in their beauty, obedient to my call; and I wandered in strange countries, and achieved many noble acts, and said many noble words; and the beings with whom I acted were palpable as myself, with beautiful faces and graceful forms. And there was a brave young knight, who was my friend, and his life I ever saved; and a lovely princess, who spoke not, but smiled ever and ever upon me. And we were lost in vast forests, and shared hard food; and as the evening drew on we came to the gates of a castle.

'Contarini! Contarini!' a voice sounded from the house, and all the sweet visions rushed away like singing-birds scared out of a tree. I was no longer a brave knight; I was a child. I rose miserable and exhausted, and, in spite of a repeated cry, I returned with a slow step and a sullen face.

I saw that there was an unusual bustle in the house. Servants were running to and fro doing nothing, doors were slammed, and there was much calling. I stole into the room unperceived. It was a

new comer. They were all standing around a beautiful girl expanding into prime womanhood, and all talking at the same time. There was also much kissing.

It appeared to me that there could not be a more lovely being than the visitor. She was dressed in a blue riding-coat, with a black hat which had fallen off her forehead. Her full chestnut curls had broken loose; her rich cheek glowed with the excitement of the meeting, and her laughing eyes sparkled with social love.

I gazed upon her unperceived. She must have been at least eight years my senior. This idea crossed me not then. I gazed upon her unperceived, and it was fortunate, for I was entranced. I could not move or speak. My whole system changed; my breath left me. I panted with great difficulty; the colour fled from my cheek, and I was sick from the blood rushing to my heart.

I was seen, I was seized, I was pulled forward. I bent down my head; they lifted it up, drawing back my curls; they lifted it up covered with blushes. She leant down; she kissed me. Oh! how unlike the dull kisses of the morning! But I could not return her embrace; I nearly swooned upon her bosom. She praised, in her good-nature, the pretty boy, and the tone in which she spoke made me doubly feel my wretched insignificance.

The bustle subsided; eating succeeded to talking. Our good aunt was a great priestess in the mysteries of plum-cake and sweet wine. I had no appetite. This was the fruitful theme of much discussion. I could not eat; I thought only of the fair stranger. They wearied me with their wonderment and their

inquiries. I was irritated, and I was irritable. The Baroness schooled me in that dull tedious way which always induces obstinacy. At another time I should have been sullen, but my heart was full and softened, and I wept. My stepmother was alarmed lest, in an unguarded moment, she should have passed the cold, strict line of maternal impartiality which she had laid down for her constant regulation. She would have soothed me with commonplace consolation. I was miserable and disgusted. I fled again to the garden.

I regained with hurrying feet my favourite haunt. Again I sat under my favourite tree; but not now to build castles of joy and hope, not now to commune with my beautiful creation, and revel in the warm flow of my excited fancy. All, all had fled; all, all had changed. I shivered under the cold horror of my reality.

I thought I heard beautiful music, but it was only the voice of a woman.

'Contarini,' said the voice, 'why do you weep?'

I looked up; it was the stranger, it was Christiana. 'Because,' I answered, sobbing, 'I am miserable.'

'Sweet boy,' she said, as she knelt down beside me, 'dry, dry your tears, for we all love you. Mamma meant not to be cross.'

'Mamma! She is not *my* mamma.'

'But she loves you like a mother.'

'No one loves me.'

'All love you, dearest! I love you;' and she kissed me with a thousand kisses.

'O, Christiana!' I exclaimed, in a low tremulous voice, 'love me, love me always! If *you* do not love me, I shall die!'

I threw my arms around her neck, and a gleam of rapture seemed to burst through the dark storm of my grief. She pressed me to her heart a thousand times, and each time I clung with a more ardent grasp; and, by degrees, the fierceness of my passion died away, and heavy sobs succeeded to my torrents of tears, and light sighs at last came flying after, like clouds in a clearing heaven. Our grief dies away like a thunder-storm.

CHAPTER IV.

The Children's Ball.

THE visit of Christiana was the first great incident of my life. No day passed without my seeing her, either at the garden-house, or at our own, and each day I grew happier. Her presence, the sound of her voice, one bright smile, and I was a different being; but her caresses, her single society, the possession of her soft hand, all this was maddening. When I was with her in the company of others I was happy, but I indicated my happiness by no exterior sign. I sat by her side, with my hand locked in hers, and I fed in silence upon my tranquil joy. But when we were alone, then it was that her influence over me broke forth. All the feelings of my heart were hers. I concealed nothing. I told her each moment that I loved her, and that until I knew her I was unhappy. Then I would communicate to her in confidence all my secret sources of enjoyment, and explained how I had turned common places into enchanted regions, where I could always fly for refuge. She listened with fondness and delight, and was the heroine of all my sports. Now I had indeed a princess. Strolling

with her, the berceau was still more like a forest, and the solace of the hermit's cell still more refreshing.

Her influence over me was all-powerful, for she seemed to change my habits and my temper. In kindness she entered into my solitary joys; in kindness she joined in my fantastic amusements; for her own temper was social, and her own delight in pastimes that were common to all. She tried to rouse me from my inaction, she counselled me to mingle with my companions. How graceful was this girl! Grace was indeed her characteristic, her charm. Sometimes she would run away swifter than an arrow, and then, as she was skimming along, suddenly stop, and turn her head with an expression so fascinating, that she appeared to me always like a young sunny fawn.

'Contarini!' she would cry in a clear flute-like voice. How I rushed to her!

I became more amiable to my brothers. I courted more the members of my little society. I even joined in their sports. It was whispered that Contarini was much improved, and the Baroness glanced at me with a kind patronising air, that seemed to hint to the initiated not to press me too heavily with their regulations, or exercise towards one so unpractised, perhaps so incapable, all the severity of their childish legislation.

The visit of Christiana drew to a close. There was a children's ball at our house, and she condescended to be its mistress. Among my new companions there was a boy, who was two years my senior. He had more knowledge of the world than most of us, for he had been some time at school. He was gay, vivacious, talkative. He was the leader in all our diversions. We all envied him his superiority,

and all called him conceited. He was ever with Christiana. I disliked him.

I hated dancing, but to-night I had determined to dance, for the honour of our fair president. When the ball opened, I walked up to claim her hand as a matter of course. She was engaged; she was engaged to this youthful hero. Engaged! Was it true! Engaged! Horrible jargon! Were the hollow forms of mature society to interfere with our play of love? She expressed her regret, and promised to dance with me afterwards. She promised what I did not require. Pale and agitated I stole to a corner, and fed upon my mortified heart.

I watched her in the dance. Never had she looked more beautiful; what was worse, never more happy. Every smile pierced me through. Each pressure of my rival's hand touched my brain. I grew sick and dizzy. It was a terrible effort not to give way to my passion. But I succeeded, and escaped from the chamber with all its glaring lights and jarring sounds.

I stopped one moment on the staircase for breath. A servant came up and asked if I wanted anything. I could not answer. He asked if I were unwell. I struggled with my choking voice, and said I was very well. I stole up to my bedroom. I had no light, but a dim moon just revealed my bed. I threw myself upon it, and wished to die.

My forehead was burning hot, my feet were icy cold. My heart seemed in my throat. I felt quite sick. I could not speak; I could not weep; I could not think. Everything seemed blended in one terrible sensation of desolate and desolating wretchedness.

Much time perhaps had not elapsed, although it seemed to me an age, but there was a sound in the

room, light and gentle. I looked around; I thought that a shadowy form passed between me and the window. A feeling of terror crossed me. I nearly cried out; but as my lips moved, a warm mouth sealed them with sweetness.

'Contarini,' said a voice I could not mistake, 'are you unwell?'

I would not answer.

'Contarini, my love, speak to Christiana!'

But the demon prevailed, and I would not speak.

'Contarini, you are not asleep.'

Still I was silent.

'Contarini, you do not love me.'

I would have been silent, but I sighed.

'Contarini, what has happened? Tell me, tell me, dearest. Tell your Christiana. You know you always tell her everything.'

I seized her hand; I bathed it with my fast-flowing tears.

She knelt down as she did on our first meeting in the garden, and clasped me in her arms; and each moment the madness of my mind grew greater. I was convulsed with passion.

And when I grew more calm she again spoke, and asked me what made me so unhappy; and I said between my wild sobs, 'O! Christiana, you too have turned against me!'

'Dear, sensitive child,' she said, as she pressed me to her bosom, 'if you feel so keenly you will never be happy. Turn against you! O! Contarini, who is your friend if not Christiana? Do I not love you better than all the world? Do I not do all I can to make you happy and good? And why should I turn against Contarini, when he is the best and

dearest of boys, and loves his Christiana with all his heart and soul?'

She raised me from the bed and placed me in her lap. My head reposed upon her fond and faithful heart. She was silent, for I was exhausted, and I felt her sweet breath descending upon my cheek.

'Go,' I said, after some little time, and in a feeble voice, 'go, Christiana. They want you.'

'Not without you, dearest. I came to fetch you.'

'I cannot go. It is impossible: I am so tired.'

'Oh! come. I shall be so unhappy if you do not come. You would not have me unhappy the whole evening, this evening that we were to be so gay. See! I will run and fetch a light, and be with you in a moment.' And she kissed me and ran away, and in a moment returned.

'Dearest Christiana! I cannot go. What will they think of me?'

'Nobody knows even that you are away; all are busy.'

'What will they think of me? Really I cannot go; and my eyes are so red.'

'Nonsense! They are the blackest and most beautiful eyes I ever saw.'

'Oh! they are horridly red,' I answered, looking in the glass. 'I cannot go, Christiana.'

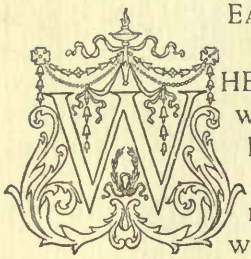
'They are not in the least red. I will wash them with some Eau de Cologne and water.'

'O! Christiana, do you really love me? Have you really made it up?'

'I love you more than ever. There, let me brush your curls. Is this your brush? What a funny little brush! Dear Contarini, how pretty you look!'

CHAPTER V.

Early Impressions.



HEN I was eight years of age a tutor was introduced into the house, and I was finally and formally emancipated from the police of the nursery and the government of women. My tutor was well qualified for his office, according to the existing ideas respecting education, which substitute for the noblest of sciences the vile art of teaching words. He was learned in his acquirements, and literary in his taste, with a calm mind, a bland manner, and a mild voice. The Baroness, who fancied herself a great judge of character, favoured him, before the commencement of his labours, with an epitome of mine. After a year's experience of his pupil, he ventured to express his opinion that I was by no means so slow as was supposed; that, although I had no great power of application, I was not averse to acquiring knowledge; and that if I were not endowed with any remarkable or shining qualities, my friends might be consoled for the absence of these high powers by my being equally destitute of those violent passions and that ungovern-

able volition usually attendant upon genius, and which too often rendered the most gifted miserable.

I was always a bad learner, and although I loved knowledge from my cradle I liked to acquire it my own way. I think that I was born with a detestation of grammars. Nature seemed to whisper me the folly of learning words instead of ideas, and my mind would have grown sterile for want of manure if I had not taken its culture into my own hands, and compensated by my own tillage for my tutor's bad husbandry. I therefore in a quiet way read every book that I could get hold of, and studied as little as possible in my instructor's museum of verbiage, whether his specimens appeared in the anatomy of a substantive, or the still more disgusting form of a dissected verb.

This period of my life, too, was memorable for a more interesting incident than the introduction of my tutor. For the first time I visited the theatre. Never shall I forget the impression. At length I perceived human beings conducting themselves as I wished. I was mad for the playhouse, and I had the means of gratifying my mania. I so seldom fixed my heart upon anything, I showed, in general, such little relish for what is called amusement, that my father accorded me his permission with pleasure and facility, and, as an attendant to this magical haunt, I now began to find my tutor of great use.

I had now a pursuit, for when I was not a spectator at the theatre, at home I was an actor. I required no audience; I was happier alone. My chivalric reveries had been long gradually leaving me: now they entirely vanished. As I learnt more of life and nature, I required for my private world some-

thing which, while it was beautiful and uncommon, was nevertheless natural and could live. Books more real than fairy tales and feudal romances had already made me muse over a more real creation. The theatre at once fully introduced me to this new existence, and there arose accordingly in my mind new characters. Heroes succeeded to knights, tyrants to ogres, and boundless empire to enchanted castles. My character also changed with my companions. Before, all was beautiful and bright, but still and mystical. The forms that surrounded me were splendid, the scenes through which I passed glittering, but the changes took place without my agency, or if I acted, I fulfilled only the system of another, for the foundation was the supernatural. Now, if everything were less beautiful, everything was more earnest. I mingled with the warlike and the wise, the crafty, the suffering, the pious; all depended upon our own exertions, and each result could only be brought about by our own simple and human energies, for the foundation was the natural.

Yet at times even this fertile source of enjoyment failed, and the dark spirit which haunted me in my first years would still occasionally descend upon my mind. I knew not how it was, but the fit came upon me in an instant, and often when least counted on. A star, a sunset, a tree, a note of music, the sound of the wind, a fair face flitting by me in unknown beauty, and I was lost. All seemed vapid, dull, spiritless, and flat. Life had no object and no beauty; and I slunk to some solitary corner, where I was content to lie down and die. These were moments of agony, these were moments in which, if I were spoken to, I had no respect for persons. Once

I remember my father found me before the demon had yet flown, and, for the first time, he spoke without being honoured.

At last I had such a lengthened fit that it attracted universal attention. I would scarcely move, or speak, or eat for days. There was a general alarm. The Baroness fell into a flutter, lest my father should think that I had been starved to death, or ill-used, or poisoned, and overwhelmed me with inquiries, each of which severely procrastinated my convalescence. For doubtless, now that I can analyse my past feelings, these dark humours arose only from the want of being loved. Physicians were called in. There were immense consultations. They were all puzzled, and all had recourse to arrogant dogmas. I would not, nay, I could not, assist them. Lying upon the sofa, with my eyes shut, as if asleep, I listened to their conferences. It was settled that I was suffering from a want of nervous energy. Strange jargon, of which their fellow-creatures are the victims! Although young, I looked upon these men with suspicion, if not contempt, and my after life has both increased my experience of their character, and confirmed my juvenile impression.

Change of air and scene were naturally prescribed for an effect by men who were ignorant of the cause. It was settled that I should leave town, accompanied by my tutor, and that we should reside for a season at my father's castle.

CHAPTER VI.

The Vision of Egeria.

'AND I, too, will fly to Egeria!' We were discoursing of Pompilius when the thought flashed across me. I no longer listened to his remarks, and I ceased also to answer. My eyes were indeed fixed upon the page, but I perceived nothing, and as it was not yet my hour of liberty, I remained in a soft state of dreamy abstraction.

When I was again free I wandered forth into the park, and I hastened, with a rushing, agitated step, to the spot on which I had fixed.

It was a small dell, and round it grew tall trees with thin and light-coloured leaves. And the earth was everywhere covered with thick fern and many wild flowers. And the dell was surrounded at a slight distance by a deep wood, out of which white glancing hares each instant darted to play upon the green sunny turf. It was not indeed a sparry grot cool in the sparkling splendour of a southern scene, it was not indeed a spot formed in the indefinite but lovely mould of the regions of my dreams, but it was green, and sweet, and wondrous still.

I threw myself upon the soft yielding fern, and covered my eyes. And a shadowy purple tint was all that I perceived; and as my abstraction grew more intense, the purple lightened into a dusky white, and this new curtain again into a glittering veil, and the veil mystically disappeared, and I beheld a beautiful and female face.

It was not unlike Christiana, but more dazzling and very pensive. And the eyes met mine, and they were full of serious lustre, and my heart beat, and I seemed to whisper with a low, but almost ecstatic voice, 'Egeria!' Yet, indeed, my lips did not move. And the vision beamed with a melancholy smile. And suddenly I found myself in a spacious cave, and I looked up into the face of a beautiful woman, and her countenance was the countenance of the vision. And we were in deep shade, but far out I could perceive a shining and azure land. And the sky was of a radiant purple, and the earth was streaming with a golden light. And there were blue mountains, and bright fields, and glittering vineyards.

And I said nothing, but I looked upon her face, and dwelt upon her beauty. And the hours flew, and the sun set, and the dew descended. And as the sky became less warm the vision gradually died away; and I arose in the long twilight, and returned home pensive and grave, but full of a soft and palpitating joy.

When I returned I could not eat. My tutor made many observations, many inquiries; but he was a simple man, and I could always quiet him. I sat at the table, full of happiness and almost without motion; and in the evening I stole into a corner, and thought of the coming day with all its rich strange joys.

My life was now one long stream of full felicity. It was, indeed, but one idea, but that idea was as beautiful as it was engrossing. Each day I hastened to the enchanted dell, each day I returned with renewed rapture. I had no thought for anything but my mystic mistress. My studies, always an effort, would now have been insupportable, had I not invented a system by which I rendered even their restraint a new source of enjoyment. I had now so complete a command of my system of abstraction, that, while my eye apparently was employed and interested with my allotted page, I, in fact, perceived nothing but my visionary nymph. My tutor, who observed me always engrossed, could not conceive that I was otherwise than a student, and, when I could remember, I would turn over a leaf, or affect with much anxiety to look out a word in the lexicon, so that his deception was perfect. Then, at the end of the day, I would snatch some hasty five minutes to gain an imperfect acquaintance with my task, imperfect enough to make him at length convinced that the Baroness' opinion of my intellect was not so erroneous as he had once imagined.

A short spring and a long summer had passed away thus delightfully, and I was now to leave the castle and return to the capital. The idea of being torn away from Egeria was harrowing. I became again melancholy, but my grief was tender, not savage. I did not recur to my ancient gloom, for I was prevented by the consoling conviction that I was loved. Yet to her the sad secret must be confided. I could not quit her without preparation. How often in solitary possession of the dreadful fact, have I gazed upon her incomparable face; how often have I

fancied that she was conscious of the terrible truth, and glanced reproachfully even amid her looks of love!

It was told: in broken accents of passionate woe, with streaming eyes, and amid embraces of maddening rapture, it was told. I clung to her, I would have clung to her for ever, but a dark and irresistible destiny doomed us to part, and I was left to my uninspired loneliness.

Returning home from my last visit to the dell I met my tutor. He came upon me suddenly, otherwise I would have avoided him, as at this moment I would have avoided anything else human. My swollen cheeks, my eyes dim with weeping, my wild and broken walk, attracted even his attention. He inquired what ailed me. His appearance, so different from the radiant being from whom I had lately parted, his voice so strange after the music which yet lingered in my ear, his salutation so varying in style from the one that ever welcomed me, and ever and alone was welcome, the horrible contrast that my situation formed with the condition I had that instant quitted, all this overcame me. I expressed my horror by my extended arms and my averted head. I shuddered and swooned.

CHAPTER VII.

First Friendship.

ALTHOUGH I have delineated with some detail the feelings of my first boyhood, I have been indebted for this record to the power of a faithful and analytic memory, and not to an early indulgence in the habits of introspection. For indeed, in these young years, I never thought about myself, or if some extraordinary circumstance impelled me to idiosyncratic contemplation, the result was not cheering. For I well remember that when, on the completion of my eleventh year, being about to repair to a college, where I was to pass some years preparatory to the university, I meditated on this great and coming change, I was impressed with a keen conviction of inferiority. It had sometimes, indeed, crossed my mind that I was of a different order from those around me, but never that the difference was in my favour; and, brooding over the mortifying contrast, which my exploits exhibited in my private and my public world, and the general opinion which they entertained of me at home, I was at times strongly tempted to consider myself even half a fool.

Though change was ever agreeable, I thought of the vicissitude that was about to occur with the same apprehension that men look forward to the indefinite horror of a terrible operation. And the strong pride that supported me under the fear, and forbade me to demonstrate it, was indeed the cause of my sad forebodings. For I could not tolerate the thought that I should become a general jest and a common agent. And when I perceived the state preparing for me, and thought of Egeria, I blushed. And that beautiful vision, which had brought me such delicious solace, was now only a source of depressing mortification. And for the first time in my life, in my infinite tribulation, and in the agony of my fancy, I mused why there should be such a devilish and tormenting variance between my thought and my action.

The hour came, and I was placed in the heart of a little and busy world. For the first time in my life I was surrounded by struggling and excited beings. Joy, hope, sorrow, ambition, craft, courage, wit, dulness, cowardice, beneficence, awkwardness, grace, avarice, generosity, wealth, poverty, beauty, hideousness, tyranny, suffering, hypocrisy, truth, love, hatred, energy, inertness,—they were all there, and all sounded, and moved, and acted about me. Light laughs, and bitter cries, and deep imprecations, and the deeds of the friendly, the prodigal, and the tyrant, and the exploits of the brave, the graceful, and the gay, and the flying words of native wit, and the pompous sentences of acquired knowledge,—how new, how exciting, how wonderful!

Did I tremble? Did I sink into my innermost self? Did I fly? Never. As I gazed upon them, a new principle rose in my breast, and I perceived

only beings whom I was determined to control. They came up to me with a curious glance of half-suppressed glee, breathless and mocking. They asked me questions of gay nonsense with a serious voice and solemn look. I answered in their kind. On a sudden I seemed endowed with new powers, and blessed with the gift of tongues. I spoke to them with a levity which was quite strange to me, a most unnatural ease. I even, in my turn, presented to them questions to which they found it difficult to respond. Some ran away to communicate their impression to their comrades, some stayed behind, but these became more serious and more natural. When they found that I was endowed with a pregnant and decided character, their eyes silently pronounced me a good fellow; they vied with each other in kindness, and the most important led me away to initiate me in their mysteries.

Weeks flew away, and I was intoxicated with my new life and my new reputation. I was in a state of ceaseless excitement. It seemed that my tongue never paused: yet each word brought forth a new laugh, each sentence of gay nonsense fresh plaudits. All was rattle, frolic, and wild mirth. My companions caught my unusual manner, they adopted my new phrases, they repeated my extraordinary apophthegms. Everything was viewed and done according to the new tone which I had introduced. It was decided that I was the wittiest, the most original, the most diverting of their society. A coterie of the congenial insensibly formed around me, and my example gradually ruled the choice spirits of our world. I even mingled in their games, although I disliked the exertion, and in those in which the emulation was

very strong I even excelled. My ambition conquered my nature. It seemed that I was the soul of the school. Wherever I went my name sounded, whatever was done my opinion was quoted. I was caressed, adored, idolised. In a word, I was popular.

Yet sometimes I caught a flying moment to turn aside and contrast my present situation with my past one. What was all this? Was I the same being? But my head was in a whirl, and I had not time or calmness to solve the perplexing inquiry.

There was a boy and his name was Musæus. He was somewhat my elder. Of a kind, calm, docile, mellow nature, moderate in everything, universally liked, but without the least influence, he was the serene favourite of the school. It seemed to me that I never beheld so lovely and so pensive a countenance. His face was quite oval, his eyes deep blue: his rich brown curls clustered in hyacinthine grace upon the delicate rose of his downy cheek, and shaded the light blue veins of his clear white forehead.

I beheld him: I loved him. My friendship was a passion. Of all our society he alone crowded not around me. He was of a cold temperament, shy and timid. He looked upon me as a being whom he could not comprehend, and rather feared. I was unacquainted with his motives, and piqued with his conduct. I gave up my mind to the acquisition of his acquaintance, and of course I succeeded. In vain he endeavoured to escape. Wherever he moved, I seemed unintentionally to hover around him; whatever he wanted, I seemed providentially to supply. In the few words that this slight intercourse called forth, I addressed him in a tone strange to our rough life; I treated him with a courtesy which seemed to elevate

our somewhat coarse condition. He answered nothing, was confused, thankful, agitated. He yielded to the unaccustomed tenderness of my manner, to the unwonted refinement of my address. He could not but feel the strange conviction that my conduct to him was different from my behaviour to others, for in truth his presence ever subdued my spirit, and repressed my artificial and excited manner.

Musæus was lowly born, and I was noble; he poor, and I wealthy; I had a dazzling reputation, he but good report. To find himself an object of interest, of quiet and tender regard, to one to whose notice all aspired, and who seemed to exist only in a blaze of cold-hearted raillery and reckless repartee, developed even his dormant vanity. He looked upon me with interest, and this feeling soon matured into fondness.

O days of rare and pure felicity! when Musæus and myself, with our arms around each other's neck, wandered together amid the meads and shady woods that formed our limits! I lavished upon him all the fanciful love that I had long stored up; and the mighty passions that yet lay dormant in my obscure soul now first began to stir in their glimmering abyss. And, indeed, in conversing with this dear companion it was that I first began to catch some glimpses of my yet hidden nature: for the days of futurity were our usual topic, and in parcelling out their fortunes I unconsciously discovered my own desires. I was to be something great, and glorious, and dazzling; but what, we could not determine. The camp and the senate, the sword and the scroll, that had raised and had destroyed so many states; these were infinitely discussed. And then a life of adven-

ture was examined, full of daring delight. One might be a corsair or a bandit. Foreign travel was what we could surely command, and must lead to much. I spoke to him, in the fulness of our sweet confidence, of the strangeness of my birth, and we marvelled together over mysterious Venice. And this led us to conspiracies, for which I fancied that I had a predisposition. But in all these scenes Musæus was to be never absent. He was to be my heart's friend from the beginning to the death. And I mourned that nature had given me no sister, with whom I could bind him to me by a still stronger and sweeter tie. And then, with a shy, hesitating voice, for he delighted not in talking of his home, he revealed to me that he was more blessed; and Caroline Musæus rose up at once to me like a star, and without having seen her I was indeed her betrothed.

Thus, during these bright days did I pour forth all the feelings I had long treasured up; and in endeavouring to communicate my desires to another, I learnt to think. I ascended from indefinite reverie to palpable cogitation.

I was now seldom alone. To be the companion of Musæus I participated in many pastimes, which otherwise I should have avoided, and in return he, although addicted to sports, was content, for my sake, to forego much former occupation. With what eagerness I rushed when the hour of study ceased, with what wild eagerness I rushed to resume our delicious converse! Nor indeed was his image ever absent from me; and when in the hour of school we passed each other, or our countenances chanced to meet, there was ever a sweet, faint smile, that, unmarked by others, interchanged our love.

A love that I thought must last forever, and forever flow like a clear bright stream; yet at times my irritable passions would disturb even these sweet waters. The temperament of Musæus was cold and slow. I was at first proud of having interested his affection, but as our friendship grew apace, I was not contented with this calm sympathy and quiet regard. I required that he should respond to my affection with feelings not less ardent and energetic than mine own. I was sensitive, I was jealous. I found a savage joy in harrowing his heart; I triumphed when I could draw a tear from his beautiful eye; when I could urge him to unaccustomed emotion; when I forced him to assure me, in a voice of agitation, that he loved me alone, and pray me to be pacified.

From sublime torture to ridiculous teasing, too often Musæus was my victim. One day I detected an incipient dislike to myself, or a growing affection for another; then I passed him in gloomy silence, because his indispensable engagements had obliged him to refuse my invitation to our walk. But the letters with which I overwhelmed him under some of these contingencies; these were the most violent infliction. What pages of mad eloquence, solemn appeals, bitter sarcasms, infinite ebullitions of frantic sensibility! For the first time in my life I composed. I grew intoxicated with my own eloquence. A new desire arose in my mind, novel aspirations which threw light upon old and often-experienced feelings. I began to ponder over the music of language; I studied the collocation of sweet words, and constructed elaborate sentences in lonely walks. Poor Musæus quite sunk under the receipt of my effusions. He could not write a line; and had he indeed been able, it would

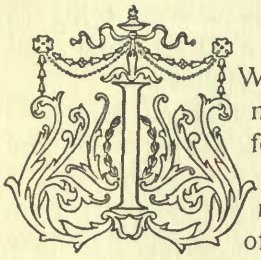
have been often difficult for him to have discovered the cause of our separations. The brevity, the simplicity of his answers were irresistible and heartrending. Yet these distractions brought with them one charm, a charm to me so captivating, that I fear it was sometimes a cause; reconciliation was, indeed, a love-feast.

The sessions of our college closed. The time came that Musæus and myself must for a moment part; but for a moment, for I intended that he should visit me in our vacation, and we were also to write to each other every week. Yet, even under these palliating circumstances, parting was anguish.

On the eve of the fatal day we took our last stroll in our favourite meads. The whole way I wept, and leant upon his shoulder. With what jealous care I watched to see if he too shed a tear! One clear drop at length came quivering down his cheek, like dew upon a rose. I pardoned him for its beauty. The bell sounded. I embraced him, as if it sounded for my execution, and we parted.

CHAPTER VIII.

Disillusion.



WAS once more at home, once more silent, once more alone. I found myself changed. My obscure aspirations after some indefinite happiness, my vague dreams of beauty, or palpable personifications of some violent fantastic idea, no longer inspired, no longer soothed, no longer haunted me. I thought only of one subject, which was full of earnest novelty, and abounded in interest, curious, serious, and engrossing. I speculated upon my own nature. My new life had developed many qualities, and had filled me with self-confidence. The clouds seemed to clear off from the dark landscape of my mind, and vast ambition might be distinguished on the far horizon, rearing its head like a mighty column. My energies stirred within me, and seemed to pant for the struggle and the strife. A deed was to be done, but what? I entertained at this time a deep conviction that life must be intolerable unless I were the greatest of men. It seemed that I felt within me the power that could influence my kind. I longed to wave my

inspiring sword at the head of armies, or dash into the very heat and blaze of eloquent faction.

When I contrasted my feelings and my situation I grew mad. The constant jar between my conduct and my conceptions was intolerable. In imagination a hero, I was in reality a boy. I returned from a victorious field to be criticised by a woman: in the very heart of a deep conspiracy, which was to change the fate of nations, to destroy Rome or to free Venice, I was myself the victim of each petty domestic regulation. I cannot describe the insane irritability which all this produced. Infinite were the complaints of my rudeness, my violence, my insufferable impertinence, incessant the threats of pains and penalties. It was universally agreed that college had ruined me. A dull, slow boy I had always been; but, at least, I was tolerably kind and docile. Now, as my tutor's report correctly certified, I was not improved in intellect, and all witnessed the horrible deterioration of my manners and my morals.

The Baroness was in despair. After several smart skirmishes, we at length had a regular pitched battle.

She began our delightful colloquy in the true style of domestic reprimand; dull, drony nonsense, adapted, as I should hope, to no state in which human intellect can ever be found, even if it have received the full benefit of the infernal tuition of nurses, which would be only ridiculous, if its effects were not so fatally and permanently injurious. She told me that whenever I spoke I should speak in a low voice, and that I should never think for myself; that if anything were refused I should be contented, and never ask the reason why, because it was not proper ever to ask questions, particularly when we were sure that

everything was done for our good; that I should do everything that was bidden, and always be ready to conform to everybody's desires, because at my age no one should have a will of his own; that I should never, on any account, presume to give my opinion, because it was quite impossible that one so young could have one; that on no account, also, should I ever be irritable, which never could be permitted: but she never considered that every effect has a cause, and never attempted to discover what might occasion this irritability. In this silly, superficial way she went on for some time, repeating dull axioms by rote, and offering to me the same useless advice that had been equally thrown away upon the tender minds of her generation.

She said all this, all this to me, all this to one who a moment before was a Cæsar, an Alcibiades. Now I had long brooded over the connexion that subsisted between myself and this lady. I had long formed in my mind, and caught up from books, a conception of the relations which must exist between a stepmother and her unwelcome son. I was therefore prepared. She grew pale as I described in mad heroics our exact situation. She had no idea that any people, under any circumstances, could be influenced by such violent, such wicked, such insane sentiments. She stared in stupid astonishment at my terrible and unexpected fluency. She entirely lost her presence of mind and burst into tears, tears not of affection, but of absolute fright, the hysteric offspring of a cold, alarmed, puzzled mind.

She vowed she would tell my father. I inquired, with a malignant sneer, of what? She protested she certainly would tell. I dilated on the probability of a

stepdame's tale. Most certainly she would tell. I burst into a dark, foaming rage. I declared that I would leave the house, that I would leave the country, that I would submit no longer to my intolerable life, that suicide (and here I kicked down a chair) should bring me immediate relief. The Baroness was terrified out of her life. The fall of the chair was the perfection of fear. She was one of those women who have the highest respect for furniture. She could not conceive a human being, much less a boy, voluntarily kicking down a chair, if his feelings were not very keen indeed. It was becoming too serious. She tried to soothe me. She would not speak to my father. All should be right, all should be forgotten, if I only would not commit suicide, and not kick down the chairs.

After some weeks Musæus paid his long-meditated visit. I had never, until I invited him, answered his solitary letter. I received him with a coldness which astonished me, and must have been apparent to any one but himself. I was distressed by the want of unction in my manner, and tried to compensate by a laboured hospitality which, like ice, was dazzling but frigid. Many causes perhaps conduced to occasion this change, then inscrutable to me. Since we had parted I had indulged in lofty ideas of self, and sometimes remembered, with a feeling approaching to disgustful mortification, the influence which had been exercised over me by a fellow child. The reminiscence savoured too much of boyish weakness, and painfully belied my proud theory of universal superiority. At home, too, when the permission for the invitation was accorded, there was much discussion as to the quality of the invited. They wished to

know who he was, and when informed looked rather grave. Some caution was muttered about the choice of my companions. Even my father, who seldom spoke to me, seemed alarmed at the prospect of a bad connexion. His intense worldliness was shocked. He talked to me for an unusual time upon the subject of school friendships, and his conversation, which was rare, made an impression. All this influenced me, for at that age I was of course the victim of every prejudice. Must I add to all this, what is perhaps the sad and dreary truth, that in loving all this time Musæus with such devotion, I was in truth rather enamoured of the creature of my imagination than the companion of my presence. Upon the foundation which he had supplied I had built a beautiful and enchanted palace. Unceasing intercourse was a necessary ingredient to the spell. We parted, and the fairy fabric dissolved into the clouds.

Certain it is that his visit was a failure. Musæus was too little sensitive to feel the change of my manner, and my duty as his host impelled me to conceal it. But the change was great. He appeared to me to have fallen off very much in his beauty. The Baroness thought him a little coarse, and praised the complexion of her own children, which was like chalk. Then he wanted constant attention, for it was evident that he had no resources of his own and certainly he was not very refined. But he was pleased, for he was in a new world. For the first time in his life he moved in theatres and saloons, and mingled in the splendour of high civilisation. I took him everywhere; in fact I could bear everything but to be alone with him. So he passed a very pleasant fortnight and then quitted us. How different from our

last parting! Cheerful indeed it was, and, in a degree, cordial. I extended him my hand with a patronising air, and mimicking the hollow courtesy of maturer beings, I expressed, in a ſlimsy voice of affected regard, a wish that he might visit us again. And six weeks before I had loved this boy better than myself, would have perilled for him my life, and shared with him my fortune!

CHAPTER IX.

A Fierce Encounter.

I RETURNED to college gloomy and depressed. Not that I cared for quitting home: I hated home. I returned in the fulness of one of my dark humours, and which promised to be one of the most terrible visitations that had ever fallen upon me. Indeed, existence was intolerable, and I should have killed myself had I not been supported by my ambition, which now each day became more quickening, so that the desire of distinction and of astounding action raged in my soul; and when I recollected that, at the soonest, many years must elapse before I could realise my ideas, I gnashed my teeth in silent rage, and cursed my existence.

I cannot picture the astonishment that pervaded our little society, when they found the former hero of their gaiety avoiding all contact and conversation, and always moving about in gloomy silence. It was at first supposed that some great misfortune had happened to me, and enquiries were soon afloat, but nothing could be discovered. At length one of my former prime companions, I should say, perhaps, patrons, expostulated with me upon the subject: I assured him,

with grim courtesy, that nothing had happened, and wished him good morning. As for Musæus, I just contrived to greet him the first day with a faint, agonising smile, and ever after I shunned him. Nothing could annoy Musæus long, and he would soon have forgotten his pain, as he had already, perhaps, freed his memory from any vivid recollection of the former pleasure which our friendship had undoubtedly brought him. He welcomed enjoyment with a smile, and was almost as cheerful when he should have been much less pleased.

But although Musæus was content to be thus quiet, the world in which he lived determined that he should be less phlegmatic. As they had nothing better to do, they took his quarrel upon themselves. 'He certainly has behaved infamously to Musæus. You know they were always together. I wonder what it can be! As for the rest of the school, that is in comparison nothing; but Musæus—you know they were decided cronies. I never knew fellows more together. I wonder what it can be! If I were Musæus I certainly would come to an explanation. We must put him up to it. If Musæus asks him he cannot refuse, and then we shall know what it is all about.'

They at length succeeded in beating it into poor Musæus' head, that he had been very ill-treated and must be very unhappy, and they urged him to insist upon an explanation. But Musæus was no hand at demanding explanation; and he deputed the task to a friend.

I was alone, sitting on a gate, in a part of the grounds which was generally least frequented, when I heard a shout which, although I could not guess its

cause, sounded in my ear with something of a menacing and malignant expression. The whole school, headed by the deputy, were finding me out, in order that the important question might be urged, that the honour of Musæus might be supported, and their own curiosity gratified.

Now at that age, whatever I may be now, I could not be driven. A soft word, and I was an Abel; an appearance of force, and I scowled a Cain. Had Musæus, instead of being a most commonplace character, which assuredly he was, had it been in his nature to have struck out a single spark of ardent feeling, to have indulged in a single sigh of sentiment, he might perhaps yet have been my friend. His appeal might have freed me from the domination of the black spirit, and in weeping over our reconciliation upon his sensitive bosom, I might have been emancipated from its horrid thrall. But the moment that Musæus sought to influence my private feelings by the agency of public opinion, he became to me, instead of an object of indifference, an object of disgust; and only not of hatred, because of contempt.

I did not like the shout; and when, at a considerable distance, I saw them advancing towards the gate with an eager run, I was almost tempted to retire: but I had never yet flinched in the course of my life, and the shame which I now felt at the contemplation of such an act impelled me to stay.

They arrived, and gathered round me; they did not know how to commence their great business: breathless and agitated, they looked first at their embarrassed leader and then at me.

When I had waited a sufficient time for my dignity, I rose to quit the place.

'We want you, Fleming,' said the chief.

'Well!' and I turned round and faced the speaker.

'I tell you what, Fleming,' said he, in a rapid, nervous style, 'you may think yourself a very great man; but we do not exactly understand the way you are going on. There is Musæus; you and he were the greatest friends last half, and now you do not speak to him, nor to any one else. And we all think that you should give an explanation of your conduct. And, in short, we come here to know what you have got to say for yourself.'

'Do you!' I answered with a sneer.

'Well, what have you got to say?' he continued, in a firmer voice and more peremptory tone.

'Say! say that either you or I must leave this gate. I was here first, but as you are the largest number, I suppose I must yield.'

I turned my heel upon him, and moved. Some one hissed. I returned, and enquired in a calm, mild voice, 'Who hissed?'

Now the person who hissed was a boy, who was indeed my match in years, and perhaps in force, but a great coward. I knew it was he, because he was just the fellow who would hiss, and looked quite pale when I asked the question. Besides, no one answered it, and he was almost the only boy who, under such circumstances, would have been silent.

'Are you afraid to own it?' I asked, in a contemptuous tone, but still subdued.

This great mob of nearly two hundred boys were very much ashamed at the predicament in which their officious and cowardly member had placed them. So their leader, proud in a fine frame, a great and renowned courage, unrivalled achievements in combat,

and two years of superiority in age over myself, advanced a little, and said, 'Suppose I hissed, what then?'

'What then!' I exclaimed, in a voice of thunder, and with an eye of lightning, 'What then! Why, then, I would thrash you.'

There was an instantaneous flutter and agitation, and panting monosyllabic whisper in the crowd; they were like birds, when the hawk is first detected in airy distance. Unconsciously, they withdrew like waves, and, the arena being cleared, my opponent and I were left in opposition. Apparently there never was a more unequal match; but indeed he was not fighting with Contarini Fleming, but with a demon that had usurped his shape.

'Come on, then,' he replied, with brisk confidence.

And I came, as the hail upon the tall corn. I flew at him like a wild beast; I felt not his best blow, I beat down his fine guard, and I sent him to the ground, stunned and giddy.

He was up again in a moment; and indeed I would not have waited for their silly rules of mock combat, but have destroyed him in his prostration. But he was up again in a moment. Again I flew upon him. He fought with subtle energy, but he was like a serpent with a tiger. I fixed upon him: my blows told with the rapid precision of machinery. His bloody visage was not to be distinguished. I believe he was terrified by my frantic air.

I would never wait between the rounds. I cried out in a voice of madness for him to come on. There was breathless silence. They were thunderstruck. They were too generous to cheer their leader. They could not refrain from sympathising with inferior force

and unsupported courage. Each time that he came forward I made the same dreadful spring, beat down his guard, and never ceased working upon his head, until at length my fist seemed to enter his very brain; and after ten rounds he fell down quite blind. I never felt his blows; I never lost my breath.

He could not come to time; I rushed forward; I placed my knee upon his chest. 'I fight no more,' he faintly cried.

'Apologise,' I exclaimed; 'apologise.' He did not speak.

'By heavens, apologise,' I said, 'or I know not what I shall do.'

'Never!' he replied.

I lifted up my arm. Some advanced to interfere. 'Off,' I shouted; 'Off, off.' I seized the fallen chief, rushed through the gate, and dragged him like Achilles through the mead. At the bottom there was a dung-hill. Upon it I flung the half inanimate body.

CHAPTER X.

Visions of Fame.

I STROLLED away to one of my favourite haunts; I was calm and exhausted: my face and hands were smeared with gore. I knelt down by the side of the stream, and drank the most delicious draught that I had ever quaffed. I thought that I should never have ceased. I felt invigorated, and a plunge in the river completed my renovation.

I reclined under a branching oak, and moralised on the past. For the first time in my life I had acted. Hitherto I had been a creature of dreams; but within the last month unconsciously I found myself a stirrer in existence. I perceived that I had suddenly become a responsible agent. There were many passions, many characters, many incidents. Love, hatred, faction, vengeance, Musæus, myself, my antagonist, his followers, who were indeed a world; our soft walks, the hollow visit, the open breach, the organised party, the great and triumphant struggle.

And as I mused, all these beings flitted across my vision, and all that had passed was again present, and again performed, except indeed that my part in the

drama was of a more studied and perfect cast; for I was conscious of much that had been omitted both in conversation and in conduct, of much that might have been finely expressed and dexterously achieved. And to introduce all this I indulged in imaginary scenes. There was a long interview between myself and Musæus, harrowing; a logomachy between myself and the chief of the faction, pungent. I became so excited that I could no longer restrain the outward expression of my feeling. My voice broke into impassioned tones; I audibly uttered the scornful jest. My countenance was in harmony with my speech; my action lent a more powerful meaning to my words.

And suddenly there was a great change, the order of which I cannot trace; for Musæus, though he looked upon me, was not Musæus, but a youth in a distant land; and I was there in a sumptuous dress, with a brilliant star; and we were friends. And a beautiful woman rose up, a blending of a Christiana and Egeria. Both of us loved her, and she yielded herself to me, and Musæus fled for aid. And there came a king with a great power, and as I looked upon his dazzling crown, lo! it encircled the brow of my late antagonist.

And I beheld and felt all this growing and expanding life with a bliss so keen, so ravishing, that I can compare it to nothing but to joys which I was then too young even to anticipate. My brain seemed to melt into a liquid, rushing stream; my blood quickened into action, too quick even to recognise pulsation; fiery and fleet, yet delicate and soft. With difficulty I breathed, yet the oppression was delicious. But in vain I endeavour to paint the refined excitement of this first struggle of my young creation.

The drama went on, nor was it now in my power to restrain it. At length, oppressed with the vitality of the beings I had formed, dazzled with the shifting brilliancy of the scenes in which they moved, exhausted with the marvellous action of my shadowy self, who figured before me in endless exploit, now struggling, now triumphing, now pouring forth his soul in sentences of burning love, now breathing a withering blast of proud defiance, I sought for means to lay the wild ghosts that I had unconsciously raised.

I lifted my hand to my face, that had been gazing all this time in fixed abstraction upon a crimson cloud. There was a violent struggle which I did not comprehend. Everything was chaos; but soon, as it were, a mystic music came rising out of the incongruous mass; a mighty secret was revealed to me, all was harmony, and order, and repose, and beauty. The whirling scene no longer changed; there was universal stillness; and the wild beings ceased their fierce action, and, bending down before me in humility, proffered their homage to their creator.

'Am I, then,' I exclaimed, looking around with an astonished and vacant air, 'Am I, then, after all, a poet?'

I sprang up, I paced up and down before the tree, but not in thought. The perspiration ran down my forehead, I trembled, I panted, I was lost. I was not conscious of my existence. My memory deserted me, the rudder of my mind broke away.

My thought came back; I threw myself on the ground. 'Yes,' I exclaimed, 'beautiful beings, I will release you from the prison-house of my brain! I will give you to freedom and to light! You shall exist not only for me, you shall go forth to the world to delight and to conquer.'

And this was the first time in my life that the idea of literary creation occurred to me; for I disliked poetry, of which indeed I had read little, except plays; and although I took infinite delight in prose fiction, it was only because the romance or the novel offered to me a life more congenial to my feelings than the world in which I lived. But the conviction of this day threw light upon my past existence. My imaginary deeds of conquest, my heroic aspirations, my long, dazzling dreams of fanciful adventure, were, perhaps, but sources of ideal action; that stream of eloquent and choice expression which seemed ever flowing in my ear, was probably intended to be directed in a different channel from human assemblies, and might melt or kindle the passions of mankind in silence. And the visions of beauty and the vows of love; were they, too, to glitter and to glow only in imagination?

CHAPTER XI.

Disappointment.

I REPAIRED the next day to my favourite tree, armed with a pencil and a paper book. My mind was, as I thought, teeming with ideas. I had composed the first sentence of my work in school-time; it seemed to me full of music. I had repeated it a thousand times; I was enchanted with its euphony. It was now written, fairly written. With rapture I perceived it placed in its destined position. But what followed? Nothing. In vain I rubbed my forehead; in vain I summoned my fancies. The traitors would not listen. My mind seemed full to the very brink, but not a drop of the rich stream overflowed. I became anxious, nervous, fretful. I walked about; I reseated myself. Again I threw down the pencil, and was like a man disenchanted. I could scarcely recall the visions of yesterday, and if with an effort I succeeded, they appeared cold, tame, dull, lifeless. Nothing can describe my blank despair.

They know not, they cannot tell, the cold, dull world; they cannot even remotely conceive the agony of doubt and despair which is the doom of youthful genius. To sigh for fame in obscurity is like sighing in a dungeon for light; yet the votary and the captive share an equal hope. But, to feel the strong

necessity of fame, and to be conscious that without intellectual excellence life must be insupportable, to feel all this with no simultaneous faith in your own power, these are moments of despondency for which no immortality can compensate.

As for myself, repeated experiments only brought repeated failures. I would not die without a struggle, but I struggled only to be vanquished. One day was too hot; another I fancied too cold. Then, again, I was not well, or perhaps I was too anxious; I would try only a sentence each day. The trial was most mortifying, for I found, when it came to this practical test, that in fact I had nothing to write about. Yet my mind had been so full; and even now a spark, and it would again light up; but the flame never kindled, or, if ever I fanned an appearance of heat, I was sure only to extinguish it. Why could I not express what I seemed to feel? All was a mystery.

I was most wretched. I wandered about in great distress, for my pride was deeply wounded, and I could no longer repose on my mind with confident solace. My spirit was quite broken. Had I fought my great battle now I should certainly have been beaten. I was distracted with disquietude; I had no point of refuge, hope utterly vanished. It was impossible that I could be anything; I must always fail. I hated to think of myself; the veriest dunce in the school seemed my superior. I grew meek and dull. I learnt my dry lessons; I looked upon a grammar with a feeling of reverence. My lexicon was constantly before me; but I made little advance. I no longer ascribed my ill progress to the uninteresting task, but to my own incapacity. I thought myself, once more, half a fool.

CHAPTER XII.

Renewed Efforts.

HAD I now been blessed with a philosophic friend, I might have found consolation and assistance; but my instructors, to whom I had a right to look up for this aid, were, of course, wanting. The system which they pursued taught them to consider their pupils as machines, which were to fulfil a certain operation, and this operation was word-learning. They attempted not to discover, or to develop, or to form character. Predisposition was to them a dark oracle; organisation a mystery in which they were not initiated. The human mind was with them always the same soil, and one to which they brought ever the same tillage. And mine was considered a sterile one, for they found that their thistles did not flourish where they should have planted roses.

I was ever considered a lazy, idle boy, because I required ideas instead of words. I never would make any further exertion than would save me from their punishments: their rewards I did not covet. Yet I was ever reading, and in general knowledge was immeasurably superior to all the students; for aught I

know, to all the tutors; for indeed, in any chance observations in which they might indulge, I could even then perceive that they were individuals of limited intelligence. They spoke sometimes of great men, I suppose for our emulation; but their great men were always commentators. They sometimes burst into an eulogium of a great work; you might be sure it was ever a huge bunch of annotations. An unrivalled exploit turned out to be a happy conjecture; a marvellous deed was the lion's skin that covered the ears of a new reading. I was confounded to hear the same epithets applied to their obscure demigods that I associated with the names of Cæsar and Socrates, and Pericles, and Cicero. It was perplexing to find that Pharsalia or a Philippic, the groves of Academus or the fanes of the Acropolis, could receive no higher admiration than was lavished upon the unknown exploits of a hunter after syllables.

After my battle I was never annoyed by my former friends. As time advanced I slightly relaxed in my behaviour, and when it was necessary we interchanged words; but I never associated with any one. I was, however, no longer molested. An idea got afloat that I was not exactly in my perfect senses; and, on the whole, I was rather feared than disliked.

Reading was my only resource. I seldom indulged in reverie. The moment that I perceived my mind wandering, I checked it with a mixed feeling of disgust and terror. I made, however, during this period, more than one attempt to write, and always with signal discomfiture. Neither of the projected subjects in any way grew out of my own character, however they might have led to its delineation had I proceeded. The first was a theme of heroic life, in

which I wished to indulge in the gorgeousness of remote antiquity. I began with a fine description, which again elevated my hopes, but when the scene was fairly painted my actors would not come on. I flung the sheet into the river, and cursed my repeated idiocy.

After an exposure of this kind I always instantaneously became practical, and grave, and stupid; as a man, when he recovers from intoxication, vows that he will never again taste wine. Nevertheless, during the vacation, a pretty little German lady unfortunately one night took it into her head to narrate some of the traditions of her country. Among these I heard, for the first time, the story of the Wild Huntsman of Rodenstein. It was unlucky. The Baroness, who was a fine instrumental musician, but who would never play when I requested her, chanced this night to be indulging us. The mystery and the music combined their seductive spells, and I was again enchanted. Infinite characters and ideas seemed rushing in my mind. I recollected that I had never yet given my vein a trial at home. Here I could command silence, solitude, hours unbroken and undisturbed. I walked up and down the room, once more myself. The music was playful, gay, and joyous. A village dance was before my vision; I marked with delight the smiling peasantry bounding under the clustering vines, the girls crowned with roses, the youth adorned with flowing ribbons. Just as a venerable elder advanced the sounds became melancholy, wild, and ominous. I was in a deep forest, full of doubt and terror; the wind moaned, the big branches heaved; in the distance I heard the baying of a hound. It did not appear, for suddenly the trumpet announced a

coming triumph; I felt that a magnificent procession was approaching, that each moment it would appear; each moment the music became louder, and already an advanced and splendid guard appeared in the distance. I caught a flashing glimpse of a sea of waving plumes and glistening arms. The music ceased, the procession vanished, I fell from the clouds; I found myself in a dull drawing-room, a silly boy, very exhausted.

I felt so excessively stupid that I instantly gave up all thoughts of the Hunter of Rodenstein, and went to bed gloomy and without hope. But in the morning, when I rose, the sun was shining so softly, the misty trees and the dewy grass were so tender and so bright, the air was so fresh and fragrant, that my first feeling was the desire of composition, and I walked forth into the park cheerful, and moved by a rising faith.

The exciting feelings of the evening seemed to return, and, when I had sufficiently warmed my mind with reverie, I sat down to my table surrounded by every literary luxury that I could remember. Ink enclosed in an ormulu Cupid, clear and brilliant, quires of the softest cream-coloured paper, richly gilt, and a perfect magazine of the finest pens. I was exceedingly nervous, but on the whole not unsuccessful. I described a young traveller arriving at night at a small inn on the borders of a Bohemian forest. I did not allow a single portion of his dress to escape, and even his steed and saddle-bags duly figured. The hostess was founded on our housekeeper, therefore I was master of my subject. From her ear-rings to her shoe-buckles, all was perfect. I managed to supply my hero with a supper, and at length I got him, not

to bed, but to his bedroom, for heroes do not get into bed, even when wearied, with the expedition of more commonplace characters. On the contrary, he first opened the window (it was a lattice-window) and looked at the moon. I had a fine moonlight scene. I well remember that the trees were tipped with silver, but oh! triumph of art, for the first time in my life I achieved a simile, and the evening breeze came sounding in his ear soft as a lover's sigh!

This last master-touch was too much for me. Breathless, and indeed exhausted, I read over the chapter. I could scarcely believe its existence possible. I rushed into the park, and hurried to some solitude where, undisturbed by the sight of a human being, I could enjoy my intense existence.

I was so agitated, I was in such a tumult of felicity, that for the rest of the day I could not even think. I could not find even time to determine on my hero's name, or to ascertain the reason for which I had brought him to such a wild scene, and placed him in such exceedingly uncomfortable lodgings. The next morning I had recovered my self-possession. Calm and critical, I reviewed the warm product of my brain which had the preceding day so fascinated me. It appeared to me that it had never been my unfortunate fate to read more crude, rugged, silly stuff in the whole course of my experience. The description of costume, which I had considered so perfect, sounded like a catalogue of old clothes. As for the supper, it was evident that so lifeless a personage could never have an appetite. What he opened the window for I know not; but certainly, if only to look at the moon he must have been disappointed, for in spite of all my asseverations, it was very dim indeed;

and as for the lover's sigh, at the same time so tame and so forced, it was absolutely sickening.

I threw away the wretched effusion; the beautiful inkstand, the cream-coloured paper, the fine pens, away they were all crammed in a drawer, which I was ever after ashamed to open. I looked out of the window, and saw the huntsman going out. I called to him, and joined him. I hated field-sports, indeed every bodily exertion, except riding, which is scarcely one; but now anything that was bodily, that was practical, pleased, and I was soon slaughtering birds in the very bowers in which I had loved Egeria.

On the whole, this was a miserable and wretched year. I was almost always depressed, often felt heart-broken. I entirely lost any confidence in my own energies, and while I was deprived of the sources of pleasure which I had been used to derive from reverie, I could acquire no new ones in the pursuits of those around me.

It was in this state of mind that, after a long and solitary walk, I found myself at a village which I had never before visited. On the skirts was a small Gothic building, beautiful and ancient. It was evening. The building was illuminated; the door open. I entered and found myself in a Catholic church. A Lutheran in a Lutheran country, for a moment I trembled; but the indifference of my father on the subject of religion had prevented me at least from being educated a bigot; and, in my Venetian meditations, I would sometimes recollect that my mother must have professed the old faith.

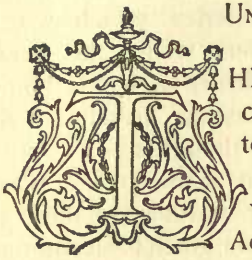
The church was not very full; groups were kneeling in several parts. All was dusk except at the high altar. There, a priest in a flaming vest officiated, and

ever and anon a kneeling boy, in a scarlet dress, rang a small and musical silver bell. Many tall white candles, in golden sticks, illuminated the sacred table, redolent of perfumes and adorned with flowers. Six large burnished lamps were suspended above, and threw a magical light upon a magical picture. It was a Magdalen kneeling and weeping in a garden. Her long golden hair was drawn off her ivory forehead, and reached to the ground. Her large blue eyes, full of ecstatic melancholy, pierced to heaven, while the heavy tears studded like pearls her wan but delicate cheek. Her clasped hands embraced a crucifix.

I gazed upon this pictured form with a strange fascination. I came forward, and placed myself near the altar. At that moment the organ burst forth, as if heaven were opening; clouds of incense rose and wreathed around the rich and vaulted roof; the priest advanced, and revealed a God which I fell down and worshipped. From that moment I became a Catholic.

CHAPTER XIII.

Unexpected Advice.



HERE was a mystery in the secret creed full of delight. Another link, too, seemed broken in the chain that bound me to the country which each day I more detested. Adoration also was ever a resource teeming with rapture, for a creed is imagination. The Magdalen succeeded to Christiana and to Egeria. Each year my mistress seemed to grow more spiritual; first reality, then fancy, now pure spirit: a beautiful woman, a mystical nymph, a canonised soul. How was this to end? Perhaps I was ultimately designed for angelic intercourse, perhaps I might mount the skies with the presiding essence of a star.

My great occupations were devout meditation and solitary prayer. I inflicted upon myself many penances. I scrupulously observed every fast. My creative power was exercised in the production of celestial visitants; my thirst for expression gratified in infinite invocation. Wherever I moved I perceived the flashing of a white wing, the streaming of radiant hair; however I might apparently be employed, I was, in fact, pondering over the music of my next supplication.

One mundane desire alone mingled with these celestial aspirations, and in a degree sprang out of their indulgence. Each day I languished more for Italy. It was a strong longing. Nothing but the liveliness of my faith could have solaced and supported me under the want of its gratification. I pined for the land where the true religion flourished in becoming glory, the land where I should behold temples worthy of the beautiful mysteries which were celebrated within their sumptuous walls, the land which the Vicar of God and the Ruler of Kings honoured and sanctified by his everlasting presence. A pilgrimage to Rome occupied my thoughts.

My favourite retreat now, when at the college, was to the ruins of a Gothic abbey, whither an hour's stroll easily carried me. It pleased me much to sit among these beautiful relics, and call back the days when their sanctity was undefiled, and their loveliness unimpaired. As I looked upon the rich framework of the eastern window, my fancy lent perfection to its shattered splendour. I beheld it once more beaming with its saints and martyrs, and radiant with chivalric blazonry. My eye wandered down the mouldering cloisters. I pictured a procession of priests solemnly advancing to the high altar, and blending in sacred melody, with their dark garments and their shining heads, elevating a golden and gigantic crosier, and waving on high a standard of Madonna.

One day as I was indulging in these soothing visions I heard a shout, and looking round, I observed a man seated at no great distance, who by his action had evidently called to me. I arose, and coming out of the ruins advanced to him. He was seated on a mass of ancient brick-work, and appeared to be

sketching. He was a tall man, fair and blue-eyed, but sun-burnt. He was hawk-nosed, with a quick glancing vision, and there was an air of acuteness in his countenance which was striking. His dress was not the dress of our country, but I was particularly pleased with his cap, which was of crimson cloth, with a broad border of fur, and fell on one side of his head like a cap in a picture.

'My little man,' said he, in a brisk clear voice, 'I am sorry to disturb you, but as probably you know this place better than I, you can, perhaps, tell me whether there be a spring at hand.'

'Indeed, sir, a famous one, for I have often drunk its water, which is most sweet, and clear, and cold; and if you will permit me, I will lead you to it.'

'With all my heart, and many thanks, my little friend.' So saying, he rose, and placing his portfolio under one arm, lifted up a knapsack, which I offered to carry.

'By no means, kind sir,' said he in a cheerful voice, 'I am ever my own servant.'

So leading him on round the other side of the abbey, and thence through a small but fragrant mead, I brought him to the spring of which I had spoken. Over it was built a small but fair arch, the keystone being formed of a mitred escutcheon, and many parts covered with thick ivy.

The eye of the stranger kindled with pleasure when he looked upon the arch; and then, sitting down upon the bank and opening his knapsack, he took out a large loaf and broke it, and as I was retiring he said, 'Prithee do not go, my little friend, but stop and share my meal. It is rough, but there is plenty. Nay, refuse not, little gentleman, for I wish to pro-

long our acquaintance. In not more than as many minutes you have conferred upon me two favours. In this world such characters are rare. You have given me that which I love better than wine, and you have furnished me with a divine sketch, for indeed this arch is of a finer style than any part of the great building, and must have been erected by an abbot of grand taste, I warrant you. Come, little gentleman, eat, prithee eat.'

'Indeed, sir, I am not hungry; but if you would let me look at your drawing of the abbey, I should be delighted.'

'What, dost love art? What! have I stumbled upon a little artist!'

'No, sir, I cannot draw, nor indeed do I understand art, but I love everything which is beautiful.'

'Ah! a comprehensive taste,' and he gave me the portfolio.

'Oh!' I exclaimed, 'how beautiful!' for the drawing turned out, not as I had anticipated, a lean skeleton pencil sketch, but one rapidly and richly coloured. The abbey rose as in reality, only more beautiful, being suffused with a warm light, for he had dashed in it a sunset full of sentiment.

'O sir! how beautiful! I could look at it for ever. It seems to me that some one must come forth from the pass of those blue mountains. Cannot you fancy some bright cavalier, sir, with a flowing plume, or even a string of mules, even that would be delicious?'

'Bravo! bravo! my little man,' exclaimed the stranger shooting a sharp scrutinising side glance. 'You deserve to see sketches. There! undo that strap and open the folio, for there are many others, and some which may please you more.'

I opened it as if I were about to enter a sanctuary. It was very full. I culled a drawing which appeared the most richly coloured, as one picks the most glowing fruit. There seemed a river, and many marble palaces on each side, and long, thin, gliding boats shooting in every part, and over the stream there sprang a bridge, a bridge with a single arch, an ancient and solemn bridge, covered with buildings. I gazed upon the scene for a moment with breathless interest, a tear of agitating pleasure stole down my cheek, and then I shouted, 'Venice! Venice!'

'Little man,' said the stranger, 'what is the matter?'

'O! sir, I beg your pardon, you must think me very foolish indeed. I am sure I did not mean to call out, but I have been longing all my life to go to Venice, and when I see anything connected with it, I feel, sir, quite agitated. Your drawing, sir, is so beautiful, that, I know not how, I thought for a moment that I was really looking upon these beautiful palaces, and crossing this famous Rialto.'

'Never apologise for showing feeling, my friend. Remember that when you do so you apologise for truth. I, too, am fond of Venice; nor is there any city where I have made more drawings.'

'What, sir, have you been at Venice?'

'Is that so strange a deed? I have been in stranger places.'

'O sir, how happy you must be! To see Venice, and to travel in distant countries—I think I could die as the condition of such enjoyment.'

'You know as yet too little of life to think of death,' said the stranger.

'Alas, sir,' I mournfully sighed, 'I have often wished to die.'

'But can one so young be unhappy?' asked the stranger.

'O sir, most, most unhappy! I am alone supported in this world by a fervent persuasion, that the holy Magdalen has condescended to take me under her especial protection.'

'The holy Magdalen!' exclaimed the stranger with an air of great astonishment; 'Indeed! and what made you unhappy before the holy Magdalen condescended to take you under her especial protection? Do you think, or has anybody told you that you have committed any sin?'

'No, sir, my life has been, I hope, innocent; nor do I see indeed, how I could commit any sin, for I have never been subject to any temptation. But I have ever been unhappy, because I am perplexed about myself. I feel that I am not like other persons, and that which makes them happy is to me a source of no enjoyment.'

'But you have, perhaps, some sources of enjoyment which are peculiar to yourself, and not open to them. Come, tell me how you have passed your life. Indeed, you have excited my curiosity; for I observed to-day, while I was drawing, that you were a good four hours reclining in the same position.'

'Four hours, sir! I thought that I had been there but a few minutes.'

'Four hours by the sun, as well as by this watch. What were you doing? Were you thinking of the blessed Magdalen?'

'No, sir!' I gravely replied, 'not to-day.'

'How then?'

'Indeed, sir,' I answered, reddening, 'if I tell you, I am afraid you will think me very foolish.'

'Speak out, little man. We are all very foolish; and I have a suspicion, that if we understood each other better you might perhaps turn out the least foolish of the two. Open, then, your mind and fear nothing. For, believe me, it is dishonourable to blush when you speak the truth, even if it be to your shame.'

There was something in the appearance and manner of the stranger that greatly attracted me. I sought him with the same eagerness with which I always avoided my fellow creatures. From the first, conversation with him was no shock. His presence seemed to sanctify, instead of outraging my solitude. His voice subdued my sullen spirit, and called out my hidden nature. He inspired me not only with confidence, but even with a degree of fascinating curiosity.

'Indeed, sir,' I began, still with a hesitating voice but a more assured manner, 'indeed, sir, I have never spoken of these things to any one, for I feel they could not believe or comprehend what I would wish to express, nor, indeed, is it delightful to be laughed at. But know that I ever like to be alone, and it is this, that when I am alone, I can indulge in thought, which gives me great pleasure. For I would wish you to comprehend, sir, that I have ever lived in, as it were, two worlds, a public world and a private world. But I should not be unhappy in the private world but for one reason, which is nothing, but I was ever most happy; but in the public world I am indeed miserable. For you must know, sir, that when I am alone, my mind is full of what seems to me beautiful thoughts; nor indeed are they thoughts alone that make me so happy, but in truth, I perform many

strange and noble acts, and these, too, in distant countries and in unknown places, and other persons appear and they also act. And we all speak in language more beautiful than common words. And, sir, many other things occur which it would take long to recount, but which, indeed, I am sure, that is, I think, would make any one very happy.'

'But all this is a source of happiness, not of unhappiness,' said the stranger. 'Am I to comprehend, then, that the source has dried up?'

'Oh! no, sir, for only this morning I had many visions, but I checked them.'

'But why check them?'

'Ah! sir,' I answered, heaving a deep sigh, 'it is this which makes me unhappy, for when I enter into this private world, there arises in the end a desire to express what has taken place in it, which indeed I cannot gratify.'

The stranger for a moment mused. Then he suddenly said, 'And when you looked upon my sketch of the abbey, there seemed to you a cavalier advancing, I think you said?'

'From the pass of the blue mountains, sir. Whenever I look upon pictures it is thus.'

'And when you beheld the Rialto, tell me what occurred then?'

'There was a rush, sir, in my mind; and when my eye caught that tall young signor, who is stepping off the stairs of a palace into a gondola, I wished to write a tale of which he should be the hero.'

'It appears to me, my young friend,' said the stranger in a serious tone, and looking at me keenly, 'it appears to me, my young friend, that you are a poet.'

'Alas, sir,' I exclaimed, extremely agitated and nearly seizing his hand, 'alas! alas! sir, I am not. For I once thought so myself and have often tried to write; and either I have not produced a line, or something so wretchedly flat and dull that even I have felt it intolerable. It is this that makes me so miserable, so miserable that, were it not for feeling in the most marked manner that I am under the especial protection of the blessed Magdalen, I think I should kill myself.'

A gentle smile played upon the lip of the stranger, but it was in an instant suppressed. Then turning to me, he said, 'Supposing a man were born with a predisposition for painting, as I might have been myself, and that he were enabled to fancy pictures in his eye, do you think that if he took up a brush for the first time he could transfer these pictures to the canvas?'

'By no means, sir, for the artist must learn his art.'

'And is not a poet an artist, and is not writing an art equally with painting? Words are but chalk and colour. The painter and the poet must follow the same course. Both must alike study before they execute. Both must alike consult Nature, and invent the beautiful. Those who delineate inanimate Nature, and those who describe her, must equally study her, if they wish to excel in her own creations; and for man, if the painter study the outward form of the animal, the inward must be equally investigated by the poet. Thus far for the natural; and for the ideal, which is an improvement upon nature, and which you will some day more clearly comprehend, remember this, that the painter and the poet, however assisted by their own organization, must alike perfect their style

by the same process,—I mean by studying the works themselves of great painters and great poets. See, then, my young friend, how unreasonable you are, that, because you cannot be a great artist without studying your art, you are unhappy.'

'O, sir, indeed, indeed, I am not! There is no application, there is no exertion, I feel, I feel it strongly, of which I am not capable, to gain knowledge. Indeed, sir, you speak to me of great things, and my mind opens to your wisdom, but how am I to study?'

'Be not too rapid. Before we part, which will be in a moment, I will write you some talismanic rules which have been of great service to myself. I copied them off an obelisk amid the ruins of Thebes. They will teach you all that is now necessary.'

'O, sir, how good, how kind you are! How different would have been my life had I been taught by somebody like you.'

'Where, then, were you educated?'

'I am a student of the college about two miles off. Perhaps you may have passed it?'

'What, the large house upon the hill, where they learn words?' said the stranger with a smile.

'Indeed, sir, it is too true. For though it never occurred to me before, I see now why, with an ardent love of knowledge, I have indeed there gained nothing but an ill name.'

'And now,' said the stranger rising, 'I must away, for the sun will in a few minutes sink, and I have to reach a village, which is some miles off, for my night's encampment.'

With a feeling of deep regret I beheld him prepare to depart. I dropped for a moment into profound

abstraction; then, rushing to him, I seized his hand, and exclaimed, 'O, sir, I am noble, and I am rich, yet let me follow you!'

'By no means,' said the stranger, good-naturedly, 'for our professions are different.'

'Yet a poet should see all things.'

'Assuredly. And you, too, will wander, but your hour is not yet come.'

'And shall I ever see Venice?'

'I doubt not; for when a mind like yours thinks often of a thing, it will happen.'

'You speak to me of mysteries.'

'There is little mystery; there is much ignorance. Some day you will study metaphysics, and you will then understand the nature of volition.'

He opened his knapsack and took out two small volumes, in one of which he wrote some lines. 'This is the only book,' he said, 'I have with me, and as, like myself, you are such a strong Venetian, I will give it you, because you love art, and artists, and are a good boy. When we meet again I hope I may call you a great man.

'Here,' he said, giving them to me, 'they are full of Venice. Here, you see, is a view of the Rialto. This will delight you. And in the blank leaf I have written all the advice you at present require. Promise, me, however, not to read it till you return to your college. And so farewell, my little man, farewell!'

He extended me his hand. I took it; and although it is an awkward thing at all times, and chiefly for a boy, I began telling him my name and condition, but he checked me. 'I never wish to know anybody's name. Were I to become acquainted with every be-

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ing who flits across me in life, the callousness of my heart would be endangered. If your acquaintance be worth preserving, fate or fortune will some day bring us again together.'

He departed. I watched his figure until it melted in the rising haze of evening. It was strange the ascendancy that this man exercised over me. When he spoke I seemed listening to an oracle, and now that he had departed, I felt as if some supernatural visitant had disappeared.

I quickened my walk home from the intense anxiety to open the volume in which I was to find the talismanic counsel. When I had arrived, I read written in pencil these words:

'BE PATIENT: CHERISH HOPE. READ MORE: PONDER LESS. NATURE IS MORE POWERFUL THAN EDUCATION: TIME WILL DEVELOP EVERY THING. TRUST NOT OVERMUCH IN THE BLESSED MAGDALEN: LEARN TO PROTECT YOURSELF.'

CHAPTER XIV.

Sudden Resolve.

INDEED I could think of nothing but the stranger. All night his image was before my eyes, and his voice sounded in my ear. I recalled each look, I repeated each expression. When I woke in the morning, the first thing I did was to pronounce from memory his oracular advice. I determined to be patient; I resolved never to despair. Reverie was no longer to be endured, and a book was to be ever in my hand.

He had himself enabled me to comply with this last rule. I seized the first opportunity to examine his present. It was the History of Venice, in French, by Amelot de la Houssaye; a real history of Venice, not one written years after the extinction of the Republic by some solemn sage, full of first principles and dull dissertations upon the vicious constitution, a prophet of the past, trying to shuffle off his commonplace deductions for authentic inspiration, but a history of Venice written by one who had witnessed the Doge sitting on his golden throne, and receiving awestruck ambassadors in his painted halls.

I read it with an avidity with which I had never devoured any book; some parts of it, indeed, with absolute rapture. When I came to the chapter upon the nobility, a dimness came over my sight: for a moment I could not proceed. I saw them all; I marked all the divisions; the great magnificoes, who ranked with crowned heads, the nobles of the war of Candia, and the third and still inferior class. I was so excited, that for a moment I did not observe that the name of Contarini did not appear. I looked for it with anxiety. But when I read that there were yet four families of such pre-eminent ancestry that they were placed even above the magnificoes, being reputed descendants of Roman Consular houses, and that of these the unrivalled race of Contarini was the chief, I dashed down the book in a paroxysm of nervous exultation, and rushed into the woods.

I ran about like a madman for some time, cutting down with a sharp stick the underwood that opposed my way, leaping trenches, hallooing, spouting, shouting, dashing through pools of water. At length I arrived at a more open part of the wood. At a slight distance was a hill. I rushed up on the hill, and never stopped till I had gained the summit. That steep ascent a little tamed me. I found myself upon a great ridge, and a vast savage view opened upon all sides. I felt now more at ease, for the extent of the prospect harmonised with the largeness and swell of my soul.

'Ha, ha!' I cried, like a wild horse. I snorted in the air, my eye sparkled, my crest rose. I waved my proud arm. 'Ha, ha! have I found it out at last? I knew there was something. Nature whispered it to me, and time has revealed it. He said truly, time has

developed everything. But shall these feelings subside into poetry? Away! give me a sword. My consular blood demands a sword. Give me a sword, ye winds, ye trees, ye mighty hills, ye deep cold waters, give me a sword. I will fight! by heavens, I will fight! I will conquer. Why am I not a doge? A curse upon the tyranny of man, why is our Venice not free? By the God of heaven I will be a doge! O, thou fair and melancholy saint!' I continued, falling on my knees, 'who in thy infinite goodness condescendedst, as it were, to come down from heaven to call me back to the true and holy faith of Venice, and to take me under thy especial protection, blessed and beautiful Mary Magdalen, look down from thy glorious seat above, and smile upon thy elected and favourite child!'

I arose refreshed by this short prayer, calmer and cooler, and began to meditate upon what was now fitting to be done. That Contarini Fleming must with all possible despatch cease to be a schoolboy was indeed evident, necessary, and indispensable. The very idea of the great house upon the hill, where they teach words, was ludicrous. Nor, indeed, would it become me ever again, under any pretence whatever, to acknowledge a master, or, as it would appear, to be subject to any laws, save the old laws of Venice, for I claimed for myself the rights and attributes of a Venetian noble of the highest class, and they were those pertaining to blood royal. But when I called to my recollection the cold, worldly, practical character of my father, the vast quantity of dull, lowering, entangling ties that formed the great domestic mesh, and bound me to a country which I detested, covered me with a climate which killed me, sur-

rounded me with manners with which I could not sympathise, and duties which Nature impelled me not to fulfil; I felt that, to ensure my emancipation, it was necessary at once to dissolve all ties of blood and affection, and to break away from those links which chained me as a citizen to a country which I abhorred. I resolved, therefore, immediately to set out for Venice. I was for the moment, I conceived, sufficiently well supplied with money, for I possessed one hundred rix-dollars, more than any five of my fellow-students together. This, with careful husbandry, I counted would carry me to the nearest sea-port, perhaps even secure me a passage. And for the rest, I had a lively conviction that something must always turn up to assist me in any difficulties, for I was convinced that I was a hero, and heroes are never long forlorn.

On the next morning, therefore, long ere the sun had risen, I commenced my adventures. I did not steal away. First I kissed a cross three times which I carried next to my breast, and then recommending myself to the blessed Magdalen, I walked off proudly and slowly, in a manner becoming Coriolanus or Cæsar, who, after some removes, were both of them, for aught I knew, my great-grandfathers. I carried in a knapsack, which we used for our rambles, a few shirts, my money, a pair of pocket pistols, and some ammunition. Nor did I forget a loaf of bread; not very heroic food, but classical in my sight, from being the victual of the mysterious stranger. Like him, also, I determined in future to drink only water.

CHAPTER XV.

En Route.

I JOURNEYED for some hours without stopping, along a road about which all I knew was, that it was opposite to the one which had first carried me to the college, and consequently, I supposed, did not lead home. I never was so delighted in my life. I had never been up so early in my life. It was like living in a new world. Everything was still, fresh, fragrant. I wondered how long it would last, how long it would be before the vulgar day, to which I had been used, would begin. At last a soft luminous appearance commenced in the horizon, and gradually gathered in strength and brightness. Then it shivered into brilliant streaks, the clouds were dappled with rich flaming tints, and the sun rose. I felt grateful when his mild but vivifying warmth fell upon my face, and it seemed to me that I heard the sound of trumpets when he came forth, like a royal hero, out of his pavilion.

All the birds began singing, and the cocks crowed with renewed pride. I felt as if I myself could sing, my heart was so full of joy and exultation. And now

I heard many pleasant rural sounds. A horse neighed, and a whip smacked; there was a whistle, and the sound of a cart-wheel. I came to a large farm-house. I felt as if I were indeed travelling, and seeing the world and its wonders. When I had rambled about before I had never observed anything, for I was full of nonsensical ideas. But now I was a practical man, and felt capable, as the stranger said, of protecting myself. Never was I so cheerful.

There was a great barking, and several dogs rushed out at me, all very fierce, but I hit the largest over the nose with my stick, and it retreated yelping into the yard, where it again barked most furiously behind the gate; the smaller dogs were so frightened that they slunk away immediately, through different hedges, nor did they bark again till I passed the gate, but I heard them then, though very feeble, and rather snappish than fierce.

The farmer was coming out of the gate, and saluted me. I returned him the salute with a firm voice and a manly air. He spoke then of the weather, and I differed from him, to show that I was a thinking being, and capable of protecting myself. I made some inquiries respecting the distance of certain places, and I acquired from him much information. The nearest town was fifteen miles off. This I wished to reach by night, as there was no great village, and this I doubted not to do.

When the heat increased, and I felt a little fatigued, I stopped at a beautiful spring, and taking my loaf out of my knapsack like the stranger, I ate with a keen relish, and slaked my slight thirst in the running water. It was the coldest and the purest water that I had ever tasted. I felt quite happy, and was

full of confidence and self-gratulation at my prosperous progress. I reposed here till noon, and as the day, though near midsummer, became cloudy, I then recommenced my journey without dread of the heat.

On I went, full of hope. The remembrance of the cut that I had given the great dog over the nose had wonderfully inflamed my courage. I longed to knock down a man. Every step was charming. Every flower, every tree, gave me delight, which they had not before yielded. Sometimes, yet seldom, for it was an unfrequented road, I met a traveller, and always prepared myself for an adventure. It did not come, but there was yet time. Every person I saw, and every place I observed, seemed strange and new: I felt in a far land. And for adventures, my own consciousness was surely a sufficient one, for was I not a nobleman incognito, going on a pilgrimage to Venice? To say nothing of the adventures that might then occur, here were materials for the novelist! Pah! my accursed fancy was again wandering. I forgot that I was no longer a poet, but something which, though difficult to ascertain, I doubted not in the end all would agree to be infinitely greater.

As the afternoon advanced the thin grey clouds melted away, the sun mildly shone in the warm light blue sky. This was again fortunate, and instead of losing my gay heart with the decline of day, I felt inspired with fresh vigour, and shot on joyous and full of cheerfulness. The road now ran through the skirts of a forest. It was still less like a commonplace journey. On each side was a large plot of turf, green and sweet. Seated on this, at some little distance, I perceived a group of men and women. My

heart beat at the prospect of an incident. I soon observed them with more advantage. Two young women were seated together repairing a bright garment, which greatly excited my wonder. It seemed of very fine stuff, and richly embroidered with gold and silver. Greatly it contrasted with their own attire and that of their companions, which was plain and, indeed, shabby. As they worked one of them burst into repeated fits of laughter, but the other was more sedulous, and, looking grave, seemed to reprove her. A man was feeding with sticks a fire, over which boiled a great pot; a middle-aged woman was stirring its contents. A young man was lying asleep upon the grass; an older one was furbishing up a sword. A lightly built but large wagon was on the other side of the road, the unharnessed horses feeding on the grass.

A little dog shrilly barked when I came up, but I was not afraid of dogs; I flourished my stick, and the laughing girl called out 'Harlequin,' and the cur ran to her. I stopped and enquired of the fire-lighter the distance to the town where I hoped to sleep. Not only did he not answer me, but he did not even raise his head. It was the first time in my life that I had not obtained an answer. I was astonished at his insolence. 'Sir,' I said, in a tone of offended dignity, 'how long is it since you have learnt not to answer the inquiry of a gentleman?'

The laughing girl burst into a renewed fit. All stopped their pursuits. The fire-lighter looked up with a puzzled sour face, the old woman stared with her mouth open, and the furbisher ran up to us with his naked weapon. He had the oddest and most comical face that I had ever seen. It was like that of

a seal, but full of ludicrous mobility. He came rushing up, saying with an air and voice of mock heroism, 'To arms, to arms!'

I was astonished, and caught the eye of the laughing girl. She was very fair, with a small nose, and round cheeks breaking into charming dimples. When I caught her eye she made a wild grimace at me, and I also laughed. Although I was trudging along with a knapsack, my dress did not befit my assumed character, and, in a moment of surprise, I had given way to a manner which still less became my situation. Women are quicker than men in judging of strangers. The two girls were evidently my friends from the first, and the fair laugher beckoned me to come and sit down by her. This gay wench had wonderfully touched my fancy. I complied with her courteous offer without hesitation. I threw away my knapsack and my stick, and stretched my legs with the air of a fine gentleman. I was already ashamed of my appearance, and forgot everything in the desire to figure to the best advantage to my new friend. 'This is the first time,' I drawled out with a languid air, and looking in her face, 'this is the first time in my life that I ever walked, and I am heartily sick of it.'

'And why have you walked, and where have you come from, and where are you going?' she eagerly demanded.

'I was tired to death of riding every day of my life,' I rejoined, with the tone of a man who had exhausted pleasure. 'I am not going anywhere, and I forget where I came from.'

'Oh, you odd thing!' said the wench, and she gave me a pinch.

The other girl, who was handsome, but dark, and of a more serious beauty, at this moment rose, and went and spoke to the crusty fire-lighter. When she returned she seated herself on my other side; so I was now between the two: but as she seated herself, though doubtless unconsciously, she pressed my hand in a sentimental manner.

'And what is your name?' asked the laughing girl.

'Theodora! how can you be so rude?' remarked the serious beauty.

'Do you know,' said the laughing girl, whispering in my ear, 'I think you must be a little count.'

I only smiled in answer, but it was a smile which complimented her penetration.

'And now may I ask who you may be, and whither you may be going?'

'We are going to the next town,' replied the serious beauty, 'where, if we find the public taste not disinclined, we hope to entertain them with some representations.'

'You are actors, then. What a charming profession! How I love the theatre! When I am at home I go in my father's box every night. I have often wished to be an actor.'

'Be one,' said the serious beauty, pressing my hand.

'Join us,' said the laughing girl, pinching my elbow.

'Why not?' I replied, and almost thought. 'Youth must be passed in adventure.'

The fair nymph produced a box of sugar-plums, and taking out a white almond, kissed it, and pushed it into my mouth. While I laughed at her wild kitten-like action, the dark girl drew a deep-coloured

rose from her bosom, and pressed it to my nose. I was nearly stifled with their joint sweets and kindness. Neither of them would take away their hands. The dark girl pressed her rose with increased force; the sugar-plum melted away; but I found in my mouth the tip of a little finger scarcely larger, and as white and sweet. There was giggling without end; I sank down upon my back. The dark girl snatched a hasty embrace; her companion fell down by my side, and bit my cheek.

'You funny little count!' said the fair beauty.

'I shall keep these in remembrance of a happy moment,' said her friend, with a sentimental air; and she glanced at me with her flashing eye. So saying, she picked up the scattered leaves of the rose.

'And I! am I to have nothing?' exclaimed the blue-eyed girl, with an air of mock sadness; and she crossed her arms upon her lap with a drooping head.

I took a light iron chain from my neck, and threw it over hers. 'There,' I said, 'Miss Sugar-plum, that is for you.'

She jumped up from the ground, and bounded about as if she were the happiest of creatures, laughing without end, and kissing the slight gift. The dark girl rose and began to dance, full of grace and expression; Sugar-plum joined her, and they fell into one of their stage figures. The serious beauty strove to excel, and indeed was the greater artist of the two; but there was a wild grace about her companion which pleased me most.

'Can you dance, little count?' she cried.

'I am too tired,' I answered.

'Nay, then, another day; for it is pleasant to look forward to frolic.'

The man with the odd face now advanced towards me. He fell into ridiculous attitudes. I thought that he would never have finished his multiplied reverences. Every time he bowed he saluted me with a new form of visage; it was the most ludicrous medley of pomposity, and awkwardness, and humour. I thought that I had never seen such a droll person, and was myself a little impregnated with his oddity. I also made him a bow with assumed dignity, and then he became more subdued.

'Sir,' said he, placing his huge hand upon his breast, and bowing nearly to the ground; 'I assure you, sir, indeed, sir, the greatest honour, sir, your company; a very great honour indeed.'

'I am equally sensible of the honour,' I replied, 'and think myself most fortunate to have found so many and such agreeable friends.'

'The greatest honour indeed, sir; very sensible, sir; always sensible, sir.'

He stopped, and I again returned his reverence, but this time without speaking.

'The greatest liberty, sir; never take liberties; but fear you will consider it a very great liberty; a very great liberty indeed, sir.'

'Indeed I shall consider myself very fortunate to comply with any wish that you can express.'

'Oh, sir, you are too kind! always are kind, have no doubt; no doubt at all, sir; but our meal, sir, our humble meal, very humble indeed; we venture to request the honour, your company, sir;' and he pronounced the last and often-repeated monosyllable with a renewed reverence.

'Indeed I fear that I have already too much and too long intruded.'

'Oh come! pray come!' and each girl seized an arm, and led me to their banquet.

I sat down between my two friends. The fire-lighter, who was the manager, and indeed proprietor of the whole concern, now received me with courtesy. When they were all seated, they called several times, 'Frederick! Frederick!' and then the young man who was on the ground jumped up and seated himself. He was not ill-looking, but I did not like the expression of his face. His countenance and his manner seemed to me vulgar. I took rather a prejudice against him. Nor, indeed, did my appearance seem much to please him, for he stared at me not very courteously; and when the manager mentioned that I was a young gentleman travelling, who had done them the honour to join their repast, he said nothing.

The repast was not very humble. There was plenty to eat. While the manager helped the soup they sat quiet and demure; perhaps my presence slightly restrained them; even the laughing girl was for a moment calm. I had a keen appetite, and, though I at first from shame restrained it, I played my part well. The droll carved a great joint of boiled meat. I thought I should have died; he seldom spoke, but his look made us all full of merriment; even the young man sometimes smiled.

'We prefer living in this way to sojourning in dirty inns,' said the manager, with an air of dignity.

'You are quite right,' I replied; 'I desire nothing better than to live always so.'

'Inns are indeed wretched things,' said the old mother. 'How extravagantly they charge for what costs them in a manner nothing!'

Wine was now produced. The manager filled a cup and handed it to me. I was just going to observe that I drank only water, when Sugar-plum, first touching it with her lips, placed it in my hand, and, pledging them all, I drank it off.

'You are eating rough fare,' said the old mother; 'but you are welcome.'

'I never enjoyed anything so much in my life,' I truly replied. 'How I envy you all the happy life you lead!'

'Before you style it happy you should have experienced it,' remarked Frederick.

'What you say is in part true; but if a person have imagination, experience appears to me of little use, since both are means by which we can equally arrive at knowledge.'

'I know nothing about imagination,' said the young man; 'but what I know I owe to experience. It may not have taught me as much as imagination has taught you.'

'Experience is everything,' said the old mother, shaking her head.

'It sometimes costs dear,' said the manager.

'Terrible, terrible,' observed the droll, with a most sad and solemn shake of the head, and lifting up his hands. I burst into a fit of laughter, and poured down another draught of wine.

Conversation now became more brisk, and I took more than my share of it; but I being new, they all wished me to talk. I got very much excited by my elocution, as well as by the wine. I discoursed upon acting, which I pronounced to be one of the first and finest of arts. I treated this subject, indeed, deeply, and in a spirit of æsthetical criticism with which they seemed unacquainted, and a little surprised.

'Should we place it,' I asked, 'before painting?'

'Before scene-painting certainly,' said the droll, in a hoarse, thick voice; 'for it naturally takes its place there.'

'I never knew but one painter,' said the old mother, 'and therefore I cannot give an opinion.'

The manager was quite silent.

'All employments are equally disgusting,' said the young man.

'On further reflection,' I continued, 'it appears to me that if we examine'—— But here the white girl pinched me so severely under the table that I could not contain myself, and I was obliged to call out. All stared, and she looked quite demure, as if nothing had happened.

After this all was merriment, fun, and frolic. The girls pelted the droll with plums, and he unfurled an umbrella to protect himself. I assisted them in the attack. The young man lighted his pipe and walked off. The old mother in vain proclaimed silence. I had taken too much wine, and for the first time in my life. All of a sudden I felt the trees dancing and whirling round. I took another bumper to set myself right. In a few minutes I fell down quite flat, and remember nothing more.

CHAPTER XVI.

A New Friend.

'I MUST get out. I am so hot.'

'You shall not,' said Thalia.

'I must, I must. I am so very hot.'

'Will you desert me?' exclaimed Melpomene.

'Oh! how hot I am. Pray let me out.'

'No one can get out at night,' said the dark girl earnestly, and in a significant voice, which intimated to her companion to take up the parable.

'No, indeed,' said her friend.

'Why not?' I asked.

'Because it is a rule. The manager will not permit it.'

'Confound the manager! What is he to me? I will get out.'

'Oh! what a regular little count,' said Thalia.

'Let me out, let me out. I never was so hot in my life.'

'Hush! hush! or you will wake them.'

'If you do not let me out I will scream.'

The manager and the droll were in the fore part of the wagon, affecting to drive, but they were both

asleep. The old mother was snoring behind them. They had put me in the back part of the wagon with my two friends.

'Let him out, Theodora,' for the other was afraid of a contention.

'Never,' said Theodora, and she embraced me with increased energy. My legs were in the other girl's lap. I began to kick and struggle.

'Oh! you naughty little count,' said one.

'Is this the return for all our love?' exclaimed the other.

'I will get out, and there is an end of it. I must have some air. I must stretch my legs. Let me out at once, or I will wake them all.'

'Let him out, Theodora.'

'He is certainly the wickedest little count; but promise you will come back in five minutes.'

'Anything, I will promise anything: only let me out.'

They unbolted the back of the wagon; the fresh air came in. They shivered, but I felt it delightful.

'Farewell, dearest,' exclaimed Melpomene, 'one parting embrace. How heavily will the moments roll until we again meet!'

'Adieu, count,' said Thalia; 'and remember you are to come back in five minutes.'

I jumped into the road. It was a clear, sharp night, the stars shining brightly. The young man was walking behind, wrapped up in a great cloak, and smoking his pipe. He came up and, with more courtesy than he had hitherto shown, assisted me in shutting the door and asked if I would try a cigar.

I declined his offer, and for some little way we walked on in silence. I felt unwell; my head ached;

my mouth was parched. I was conscious that I had exposed myself. I had commenced the morning by vowing that I would drink only water, and for the first time in my life I had got tipsy with wine. I had committed many other follies, and altogether felt much less like a hero. I recalled all my petty vanity and childish weaknesses with remorse. Imagination was certainly not such a sure guide as experience. Was it possible that one, who had already got into such scrapes, could really achieve his great purpose? My conduct and my situation were assuredly neither of them Roman.

As I walked on the fresh air did its kind office. My head was revived by my improved circulation, my companion furnished me with an excellent draught of water. Hope did not quite desert my invigorated frame. I began to turn in my mind how I might yet prosper.

'I feel better,' I said to my companion, with a feeling of gratitude.

'Ay! ay! that wagon is enough to make any one ill, at least any one accustomed to a more decent conveyance. I never enter it. To say nothing of their wine, which is indeed intolerable to those who may have tasted a fair glass in the course of this sad life.'

'You find life, then, sad?' I inquired with a mixed feeling of curiosity and sympathy.

'He who knows life will hardly style it joyous.'

'Ah, ah!' I thought to myself, 'here is some chance of philosophical conversation. Perhaps I have found another stranger, who can assist me in self-knowledge.' I began to think that I was exceedingly wrong in entertaining a prejudice against this young man; and in a few minutes I had settled that his

sullen conduct was the mark of a superior mind, and that he himself must be an interesting personage.

'I have found life very gloomy myself,' I rejoined; 'but I think it arises from our faulty education. We are taught words and not ideas.'

'There is something in that,' said the young man thoughtfully.

'After all, perhaps, it is best to be patient, and cherish hope.'

'Doubtless,' said the young man.

'And I think it equally true, that we should read more and ponder less.'

'Oh! curse reading,' said my friend; 'I never could read.'

'You have like myself, then, indulged in your own thoughts?'

'Always,' he affirmed.

'Ah! indeed, my dear friend, there is after all nothing like it. Let them say what they will, but give me the glorious pleasures of my private world, and all the jarring horrors of a public one I leave without regret to those more fitted to struggle with them.'

'I believe that most public men are scoundrels,' said the young man.

'It is their education,' I rejoined, although I did not clearly detect the connexion of his remark. 'What can we expect?'

'No, sir, it is corruption,' he replied, in a firm tone.

'Pray,' said I, leading back the conversation to a point which I more fully comprehended, 'is it your opinion that nature is stronger than education?'

'Why,' said my friend, taking a good many whiffs of his pipe, 'there is a great deal to be said on both sides.'

'One of the wisest and most extraordinary men I ever knew, however, was of a decided opinion that nature would ultimately prevail.'

'Who might he be?' asked my companion.

'Why, really, his name—but it is a most extraordinary adventure, and to this hour I cannot help half believing that he was a supernatural being—and the truth is I do not know his name, for I met him casually and under peculiar circumstances; and though we conversed much, and of very high matters, he did not, unfortunately, favour me with his name.'

'That certainly looks odd,' said Mr. Frederick; 'for when a man sheers off without giving his name, I, for one, never think him better than he should be.'

'Had he not spoken of the blessed Magdalen in a way which I can scarcely reconcile with his other sentiments, I should certainly have considered him a messenger from that holy personage, for I have the best reasons for believing that I am under her especial protection.'

'If he abused her, that could scarcely be,' remarked Frederick.

'No. Certainly I think he must have been only a man; for he presented me with a gift before his departure——'

'That was handsome.'

'And I can hardly believe that he was really deputed, though I really do not know. Everything seems mysterious; although I believe, after all, there is little mystery, but, on the contrary, much ignorance.'

'No doubt: though they are opening schools now in every parish.'

'And how much did he give you?' continued Frederick.

'How much! I do not understand you.'

'I mean, what did he give you?'

'A most delightful book, to me particularly interesting.'

'A book!'

'A book which I shall no doubt find of great use in my travels.'

'I have myself some thoughts of travelling,' said Frederick; 'for I am sick of this life, which is ill-suited to my former habits, but one gets into scrapes without thinking of it.'

'One does, in a most surprising manner.' I never made an observation in a tone of greater sincerity.

'You have led a different sort of life then?' I asked. 'To tell you the truth, I thought so. You could not disguise from me that you were superior to your appearance. I suppose, like myself, you are incog.?'

'That is the exact truth.'

'Good heavens! how lucky it is that we have met! Do not you think that we could contrive to travel together? What are your plans?'

'Why, to say truth, I care little where I go. It is necessary that I should travel about for some time, and see the world, until my father, the count, is reconciled.'

'You have quarrelled with your father?'

'Do not speak of it. It is a sad affair. But I hope that it will end well. Time will show.'

'Time, indeed, develops everything.'

'I hope everything from my mother the countess's influence; but I cannot bear speaking about it. I am supported now by my sister, Lady Caroline, out of her own allowance, too, poor creature. There is noth-

ing like those sisters.' And he raised his hand to his face, and would have brushed away the tear that nearly started from his manly eye.

I was quite affected. I respected his griefs, and would not press him for details. I exhorted him to take courage.

'Ay! ay! it is very easy talking; but when a man, accustomed to the society and enjoyments I have been, finds himself wandering about the world in this manner, it is very easy to talk; but curse it, do not let us speak of it. And now where do you intend to go?'

'I am thinking of Venice.'

'Venice! just the place I should like to see. But that requires funds. You are welcome to share mine as far as they will last; but have you anything yourself?'

'I have one hundred rix-dollars,' I replied; 'not too much certainly, but I quitted home without notice. You understand.'

'Oh, yes! I have done these things myself. At your age I was just such a fellow as you are. A hundred rix-dollars! not too much, to be sure, but with what I have got it will do. I scorn to leave a companion in distress like you. Let me be shivered if I would not share the last farthing with the fellow I liked.'

'You shall never repent, sir, your kindness to me; of that feel assured. The time may come when I may be enabled to yield you assistance, nor shall it be wanting.'

We now began seriously to consult over our plans. He recommended an immediate departure even that night, or else, as he justly remarked, I should get

perhaps entangled with these girls. I objected to quitting so unceremoniously, and without thanking my kind friends for their hospitality, and making some little present to the worthy manager, but he said that that worthy manager already owed him a year's salary, and therefore I need not be anxious on his account. Hamburg, according to him, was the port to which we must work our way, and, indeed, our departure must not be postponed an hour, for, luckily for us, the next turning was the route to Hamburg. I was delighted to find for a friend such a complete man of the world, and doubted not, under his auspices, most prosperously to achieve my great object.

CHAPTER XVII.

Misfortune.

HERE is your knapsack. I woke the girls getting it. They thought it was you, and would have given me more kind words and kisses than I care for. Theodora laughed heartily when she found out her mistake, but Æmilia was in a great rage.'

'Good-natured lasses! I think I must give them a parting embrace.'

'Pooh! pooh! that will spoil all. Think of Venice. I cannot get at my portmanteau. Never mind, it matters little. I always carry my money about me. We must make some sacrifices, and we shall get on the better for it, for I can now carry our provisions; and yet my ribbon of the order of the Fox is there—pah! I will not think of it. See! here runs the Hamburg road. Cheerily, boy, and good-bye to the old wagon.'

He hurried me along. I had no time to speak.

We pushed on with great spirit, the road again entering the forest, on the skirts of which I had been the whole day journeying.

'I know this country well,' said Frederick, 'for in old days I have often hunted here with my father's

hounds. I can make many a short cut that will save us much. Come along down this glade. We are making fine way.'

We continued in this forest several hours, walking with great speed. I was full of hope, and confidence, and self-congratulation, that I had found such a friend. He took the whole management upon himself, always decided upon our course, never lost his readiness. I had no care, the brisk exercise prevented me from feeling wearied. We never stopped.

The morning broke, and gave me fresh courage. The sun rose, and it was agreeable to think that I was still nearer Venice. We came to a pleasant piece of turf, fresh from the course of a sparkling rivulet.

'We have gone as good as thirty miles,' said Frederick. 'Had we kept to the common road we should have got through barely half.'

'Have we, indeed!' I said. 'This is indeed progress; but there is nothing like willing hearts. May we get on as well each day!'

'Here I propose to rest awhile,' said my companion: 'a few hours' repose will bring us quite round. You must not forget that you rather debauched yesterday.'

Now that I had stopped I indeed felt wearied and exceedingly sleepy. My companion kindly plucked some fern, and made me an excellent bed under a branching tree.

'This is, indeed, a life of adventure,' I said. 'How very kind you are! Such a bed in such a scene would alone repay for all our fatigue.'

He produced some bread and a bottle, and gathered some cresses; but I felt no desire to eat or drink, and

before he had finished his meal I had sunk into a deep slumber.

I must have slept many hours, for when I woke it was much past noon. I arose wonderfully refreshed. I looked round for Frederick, but, to my surprise, he was not there. I jumped up, and called his name. No answer. I became alarmed, and ran about the vicinity of our encampment, shouting 'Frederick!' There was still no answer. Suddenly I observed that my knapsack also was gone. A terrible feeling of doubt, or rather dismay, came over me. I sank down and buried my face in my hands, and it was some minutes before I could even think.

'Can it be? It is impossible! Infamous knave, or rather, miserable ass! Have I been deceived, entrapped, plundered! O, Contarini, Contarini, you are at length punished for all your foolery! Frederick, Frederick! he cannot surely have left me. He is joking, he is trying to frighten me. I will not believe that I have been deceived. He must be trying to frighten me. I will not appear frightened. I will not shout in the least. Ah! I think I see him behind that tree.' I jumped up again and ran to the tree, but there was no Frederick. I ran about, in turn shouting his name, execrating my idiocy, confiding in his good faith, proclaiming him a knave. An hour, a heavy but agitating hour, rolled away before I was convinced of the triumph of experience over imagination.

I was hungry, I was destitute, I was in a wild and unknown solitude; I might be starved, I might be murdered, I might die. I could think of nothing but horrible events. I felt for the first time in my life like a victim. I could not bear to recall my old feelings. They were at once maddening and mortifying.

I felt myself, at the same time, the most miserable and the most contemptible of beings. I entirely lost all my energy. I believed that all men were villains. I sank upon the ground and gave myself up to despair. In a word, I was fairly frightened.

I heard a rustling in a neighbouring copse and darted up. I thought it was Frederick. It was not Frederick, but it was a human being. An ancient woodman came forth from a grove of oaks, a comely and venerable man. His white hair, his fresh, hale face, his still, keen eye, and the placid, benignant expression of his countenance, gave me hope. I saluted him, and told him my story. My appearance, my streaming eyes, my visible emotion, were not lost upon him. Sharply he scrutinised me, many were the questions he asked, but he finally credited my tale. I learnt from him that during the night I had advanced into the interior of the forest, that he himself lived in a cottage on its skirts some miles off, that he was about to return from his daily labour, and that I should accompany him. As for the road to Hamburg, that was a complete invention. I also collected that home, as well as the college, was very distant.

We proceeded together along a turf road, with his donkey laden with the day's spoils. I regained my cheerfulness, and was much interested by my new companion. Never had I seen any one so kind, and calm, and so truly venerable. We talked a great deal about trees. He appeared to be entirely master of his calling. I began to long to be a woodman, to pass a quiet, and contemplative, and virtuous life, amid the deep silence and beautiful scenery of forests, exercising all the primitive virtues which became so unsophisticated a career.

His dog darted on before us with joyful speed. We had arrived at his cottage, which was ancient, and neat, and well ordered as himself. His wife, attentive to the welcome bark, was already at the gate. She saluted me; and her husband, shortly telling my tale, spoke of me in kind terms. Never had I been treated with greater kindness, never was I more grateful for it. The twilight was dying away, the door was locked, the lamp lighted, a blazing log thrown upon the fire, and the round table covered with a plenteous and pleasant meal. I felt quite happy; and, indeed, to be happy yourself you must live among the happy.

The good woman did not join us in our meal, but sat by the fireside under the lamp, watching us with a fond smile. Her appearance delighted me; she seemed like a picture.

'Now does not the young gentleman remind you of Peter?' said the dame; 'for that is just where he used to sit, God bless him! I wonder when we shall hear of him again?'

'She speaks of our son, young master,' said my host, turning to me in explanation.

'A boy such as has been seldom seen among people of our condition, sir, I can well say,' continued the old woman, speaking with great animation. 'Oh, why should he have ever left home? Young people are ever full of fancies, but will they ever find friends in the world they think so much of, like the father who gives them bread, and the mother who gave them milk?'

'My father brought me up at home, and I have ever lived at home,' observed the old man. 'I have ever lived in this forest; many is the tree that is my

foster-brother; and that is sixty-eight years come Martinmas. I saw my father happy, and wished no more. Nor had I ever a heavy hour till Peter began to take these fancies in his head, and that, indeed, was from a boy this high, for he was ever full of them, and never would do anything with the axe. I am sure I do not know how they got there. The day will come he will wish he had never left home, and perhaps we may yet see him.'

'Too late, too late!' said the old woman. 'He might have been the prop of our old age. Many is the girl that would have given her eyes for Peter. Our grandchildren might have been running this moment about the room. God bless them, whom we shall never bless. And the old man now must work for his old woman as if it were his wedding year.'

'Pooh! pooh! as for that say nothing,' rejoined Peter; 'for I praise God my arms and legs are hearty yet. And indeed, were they not, we cannot say that our poor boy has ever forgotten us.'

'Indeed it is true. He is our own son. But where does the money come from? that is the question. I am sure I often think what I dare not say, and pray God to forgive me. How can a poor woodman's son who never works gain wherewith to support himself, much more to give away? I fear that if all had their rights, we should have better means to succour Peter than Peter us.'

'Nay, nay, say not that, dear Mary,' said her husband, reprovingly, 'for it is in a manner tempting the devil.'

'The devil perhaps sent the thought, but it often comes,' answered the old woman, firmly.

'And where is your son, sir?' I asked.

'God, who knows all, can tell, not I,' said the old man; 'but wherever he be I pray God to bless him.'

'Has he left you long, sir?'

'Fifteen years come September; but he ran away once before, when he was barely your height, but that was not for long.'

'Indeed,' I said, reddening.

'I believe he is a good lad,' said the father, 'and will never believe harm against him till I hear it. He was a kind boy, though strong-tempered, and even now every year he sends us something, and sometimes writes a line, but never tells us where he is, only that he is very happy, if we are. But for my part I rather think he is in foreign parts.'

'That is certain,' interrupted Dame Mary. 'I dare say he is got among the French.'

'He was ever a wrong-headed queer chap,' continued the father in an undertone to me; 'sometimes he wanted to be a soldier, then a painter, then he was all for travelling about; and I used say, "Peter, my boy, do you know what you are?" And when I sent him in the woods to work, when he came home at night, I found that he had been painting the trees!'

The conversation had taken a turn, which induced meditation. I was silent and thoughtful; the dame busied herself with work, the old man resumed his unfinished meal. Suddenly there was a shouting at the garden gate. All stared and started. The dog jumped up and barked. The shouting was repeated, and was evidently addressed to the inmates of the cottage. The old woodman seized his rifle, and opened the casement.

'Who calls?' he demanded, 'and what want you?'

'Dwelleth Peter Winter here?' was inquired.

'He speaks to you,' was the reply.

'Open the door, then,' said the shouter.

'Tell me first who you are.'

'My name has been already mentioned,' answered the shouter, with a laugh.

'What mean you?'

'Why, that my name is Peter Winter.'

The old woman screamed; a strange feeling also was my lot; the woodman dropped the loaded rifle. I prevented it from going off; neither of them could move. At last I opened the door, and the stranger of the abbey entered.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Peter Winter.

THERE was some embracing, much blessing, the old woman never ceased crying, and the eyes of the father were full of tears. The son alone was calm, and imperturbable, and smiling.

'Are you indeed Peter?' exclaimed the old woman, sobbing with joy.

'I never heard so from any one but you,' answered the son.

'And am I blessed with the sight of you before my death?' continued the mother.

'Death! why you look ten years younger than when I last saw you?'

'Oh! dear no, Peter. And why did not you tell us where you were?' she continued.

'Because I never knew.'

'O! my dear, dear son, how tall you have grown! and pray how have you managed to live? honestly, I am sure; your face says so.'

'As for that, it does not become me to praise myself; but you see I have saved my neck.'

'And what would you like to eat?'

'Anything.'

The father could not speak for silent joy. I had retired to the remotest corner of the room.

'The old cottage pretty as ever. I have got a drawing of it in my portfolio: always kept it, and your portrait too, mother, and my father cutting down Schinkel's oak; do you remember?'

'Do I remember! Why, what a memory the child has got, and only think of its keeping its poor old mother's head in its pocket-book, and the picture of the cottage, and father cutting down Schinkel's oak. Do I remember! Why, I remember——'

'Come, my dear old lady, give me something to eat, and father, your hand again. You flourish like one of your foster-brothers. A shower of blessings on you both.'

'Ah! what do we want more than to see our dear Peter?' said the old woman bustling about the supper. 'And as for working, I warrant you, you shall be plagued no more about working; shall be as idle as it pleases, that's for it. For old Peter was only saying this evening, that he could do more work now, and more easily than when he first married; ay! he will make old bones, I warrant him.'

'I said, Mary——'

'Pooh! pooh! never mind what you said, but get the brandy bottle, and give our dear Peter a sup. He shall be plagued no more about working, and that's for it. But, Lord bless us, where is the young master all the time, for I want him to help me get the things.'

I stepped forward and caught the eye of the son. 'What,' he exclaimed, 'my little embryo poet, and how came you here, in the name of the holy Magdalen?'

'It is a long story,' I said.

'Oh! then pray do not tell it,' he replied.

Supper soon appeared. He ate heartily, talking between each mouthful, and full of jests. The father could not speak, but the mother was never silent. He asked many questions about old acquaintances, and I fancied he asked them with little real interest, and only to gratify his mother, who, at each query, burst into fresh admiration of his memory and his kind-heartedness. At length, after much talk, he said, 'Come, old people, to bed! to bed! these hours are not for grey hairs. We shall have you all knocked up to-morrow, instead of fresh and joyful.'

'I am sure I cannot sleep,' said the dame, 'I am in such a taking.'

'Pooh! you must sleep, mother: good night to you, good night,' and embracing her he pushed her into the next room; 'good night, dear father,' he added in a soft and serious tone, as he pressed the honest woodman's hand.

'And now, little man, you may tell me your story, and we will try to talk each other to sleep.' So saying, he flung a fresh log on the fire, and stretched his legs in his father's ancient seat.

CHAPTER XIX.

More Advice.

IT WAS settled that I should remain at the cottage for a few days, and then that, accompanying Winter, I should repair to the capital. Thither he was bound; and for myself, both from his advice and my own impulse, I had resolved to return home.

On the next morning the woodman went not to his usual labour, but remained with his son. They strolled out together, but in a short time returned. The mother bustled about preparing a good dinner. For her this was full employment, but time hung heavy on the old man. At last he took his axe and fairly set to work at an old tree near his dwelling, which he had long condemned, and never found time to execute. His son and he had few ideas to exchange, and he enjoyed his happiness more while he was employed. Winter proposed a ramble to me, and I joined him.

He was gay, but would not talk about himself, which I wished. I longed to know what he exactly was, but deemed a direct inquiry indelicate. He delighted to find out places he had known when

young, and laughed at me very much about my adventures.

'You see what it is to impart knowledge to youth like you. In eight-and-forty hours all these valuable secrets are given to Master Frederick, who will perhaps now turn out a great poet.'

I bore his rallying as good-humouredly as he could wish, and tried to lead our conversation to subjects which interested me. 'Ask me no more questions,' he said, 'about yourself; I have told you everything. All that I can recommend you now is to practise self-forgetfulness.'

We rested ourselves on a bank and talked about foreign countries, of which, though he himself never figured in his tales, he spoke without reserve. My keen attention proved with what curiosity and delight I caught each word. Whenever he paused, I led him by a question to a fresh narrative. I could not withstand expressing how I was charmed by such conversation. 'All that I tell you,' he said, 'and much more, may be found in books. Those that cannot themselves observe, can at least acquire the observation of others. These are indeed shadows, but by watching these shadows we learn that there are substances. Little man, you should read more. At your time of life you can do nothing better than read good books of travels.'

'But is it not better myself to travel?'

'Have I not told you that your wandering days have not yet come? Do you wish to meet another Mr. Frederick? You are much too young. Travel is the great source of true wisdom, but to travel with profit you must have such a thing as previous knowledge. Do you comprehend?'

'Ah! sir, I fear me much that I am doomed to be unhappy.'

'Pooh! Pooh! Clear your head of all such nonsense. There is no such thing as unhappiness.'

'No such thing as unhappiness, sir? How may this be, for all men believe——'

'All men believe many things which are not true; but remember what I say, and when you have lived as long as I have, you will perhaps discover that it is not a paradox. In the meantime it is nonsense talking about it, and I have got an enormous appetite. A fine dinner to-day for us, I warrant you.'

So we returned home at a brisk pace. The old woman looked out at the door when she heard our steps, and, nodding to her son with a smile of fondness, 'You must walk in the garden awhile, Peter,' she said, 'for I am busy getting the room ready. Now, I dare say you are thinking of the dinner, but you cannot tell me what there is for Peter, that you cannot. But I'll tell you, for if you fret yourself with guessing, mayhap it will hurt your relish. Do you remember crying once for a pig, Peter, and father saying a woodman's boy must not expect to live like the forest farmer's son? Well, he may say what he likes; Peter, there *is* a pig.'

The father joined us, cleanly shaved, and in his Sunday raiment. I never saw any one look so truly respectable as did this worthy old peasant in his long blue coat with large silver buttons, deep waistcoat covered with huge pink flowers and small green leaves, blue stockings, and massy buckles.

The three days at the woodman's cottage flew away most pleasantly. I was grieved when they were gone, and, in spite of my natural courage, which

was confirmed by meditation, and strengthened by my constantly trying it in ideal conjunctures, I thought of my appearance at home with a little anxiety.

We were to perform our journey on foot. The morning of the third day was to light us into the city. All was prepared. I parted from my kind friends with many good wishes, hearty shakes of the hand, and frequent promises of another visit. Peter was coming to them again very shortly. They hoped I might again be his companion. The father walked on with us some little way. The mother stood at the cottage door until we were out of sight, smiling through her tears, and waving her hand with many blessings.

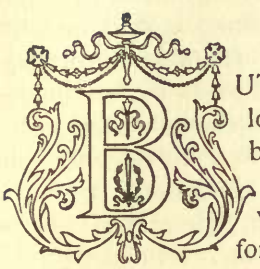
'I must take care of my knapsack,' said the younger Winter, 'evil habits are catching.'

'Nevertheless, I hope you will sometimes let me carry it. At any rate give me your portfolio.'

'No, no, you are not to be trusted, and so come on.'

CHAPTER XX.

Home.



UT, my dear friend, you have lodged, you have fed, you have befriended, you have supported me. If my father were to know that we parted thus he would never forgive me. Pray, pray, tell me.'

'Prithee, no more. You have told me your name, which is against my rules; you know mine, no one of my fellow-travellers ever did before; and yet you are not contented. You grow unreasonable. Did I not say that, if our acquaintance were worth maintaining we should meet again? Well! I say the same thing now, and so good-bye.'

'Dear sir, pray, pray——'

'This is my direction; your course lies over that bridge; look sharp about you, and do not enter into your private world, for the odds are you may find your friend Count Frederick picking a pocket. Good morning, little man.'

We parted, and I crossed the bridge. The stir of man seemed strange after the silence of the woods. I did not feel quite at my ease; my heart a little misgave me. I soon reached the street in which my

father resided. I thought of the woodman's cottage, and the careless days I had spent under that simple roof. I wished myself once more by Schinkel's oak, talking of Araby the Blest with that strange man, with whom my acquaintance, although so recent, seemed now only a dream. Did he really exist; were they all real beings with whom I seemed lately to have consorted? Or had I indeed been all this time plunged in one of my incurable reveries? I thought of the laughing girl, and her dark sentimental friend. I felt for the chain which I always wore round my neck. It was gone. No doubt, then, it must all be true.

I had reached the gate. I uttered an involuntary sigh and took up the knocker. It was for a moment suspended. I thought of the Contarinis, and my feeble knock hurried into a sharp rap. ''Tis a nervous business,' thought I, 'there is no concealing it. 'Tis flat rebellion, 'tis desertion, 'tis an outrage of all parental orders, 'tis a violation of the law of nature and nations.' I sighed again. 'Yet these are all bugbears; for what can they do to me? Is there any punishment that they can inflict that I care for? Certainly not, and 'tis likely it will all blow over. Yet the explanations, and the vile excuses, and the petty examinations,—there is something pitiful, and contemptible, and undignified, in the whole process. What is it that so annoys me? 'Tis not fear. I think it is the disgust of being accountable to any human being.'

I went upstairs. My father, I felt sure, was away. I found the Baroness alone. She started when I entered, and looked sullen. Her countenance, she flattered herself, was a happy mixture of the anxiety which became both a spouse and a mother, pity for

my father, pity for me, and decided indignation at my very improper conduct.

'How do you do, Madam?' I enquired in as quiet a tone as I could command. 'My father is, I suppose, at his office.'

'I am sure I cannot tell,' she replied, speaking in a subdued serious tone, as if there were death in the house. 'I believe he *has* gone out to-day. He has been very agitated indeed, and I think is extremely unwell. We have all been extremely agitated and alarmed. I have kept myself as quiet as I could, but can bear no noise whatever. The Baron has received a fine letter from your tutor,' she continued in a brisker, and rather malignant tone, 'but your father will speak to you. I know nothing about these things. I wished to have said something to soothe him, but I know I never interfere for any good.'

'Well,' I observed, with a dogged, desperate tone, speaking through my teeth, 'well! all I can say is, that if my father has been prejudiced against me by a parcel of infamous falsehoods, as it appears by your account, I know how to protect myself. I see how the ground lies; I see that I have already been judged, and am now to be punished, without a trial. But I will not submit any longer to such persecution. Kindness in this house I never expect, but justice is a right enjoyed by a common woodman and denied only to me.'

'Dear me, Contarini, how violent you are! I never said your father was even angry. I only said I thought he was a little unwell, a little bilious, I think. My dear Contarini, you are always so very violent. I am sure I said I was confident you would never have left college without a very good cause indeed. I

have no doubt you will explain everything in the most satisfactory manner possible. I do not know what you mean always by talking of not expecting kindness in this house. I am sure I never interfere with you. I make it a rule always, when your interest is in the least concerned, never to give an opinion. I am sure I wish you were more happy and less violent. As for judging and punishing without a trial, you know your father never punishes any one, nor has he decided anything, for all he knows is from the letter of your tutor, and that is but a line, merely saying you had quitted the college without leave, and, as they supposed, had gone home. They said, too, that they were the more surprised, as your general behaviour was quite unexceptionable. Not at all against you the letter was, not at all, I assure you. I pointed out to your father more than once that the letter was, if anything, rather in your favour, because I had no doubt that you would explain the step in a satisfactory manner; and they said, you see, that your conduct, otherwise, was perfectly unexceptionable.'

'Well, my dear Madam, I am sorry if I have offended you. How are my brothers?'

'I am willing to forget it. You may say and think what you please, Contarini, as long as you are not violent. The children are pretty well. Ernest is quite ready to go to college, and now there is no one to take care of him. I always thought of your being there with quite a feeling of satisfaction, for I was sure that you would not refuse to do what you could for him among the boys. As it is, I have no doubt he will be killed the first half-year, or, at least, have a limb broken, for, poor dear boy, he is so delicate, he cannot fight.'

'Well, my dear Madam, if I be not there, I can recommend him to some one who will take care of him. Make yourself easy. A little rough life will do him no harm, and I will answer he is not killed, and even have not a limb broken. Now what do you recommend me to do about my father? Shall I walk down to him?'

'I certainly think not. You know that he will certainly be at home this afternoon, though, to be sure, he will be engaged; but to-morrow, or the day after, I have no doubt he will find half an hour to speak to you. You know he is so very busy.'

I immediately resolved to walk down to him. I had no idea of having a scene impending over me in this manner for days. My father at this time filled the office of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He had been appointed to this post recently, and I had never yet visited him at his new office. I repaired to it immediately. It was at some distance from his house. His horses were waiting at the door; therefore I was sure that he was to be found. When I entered, I found myself in a hall where a porter was loitering in a large chair. I asked him for Baron Fleming. He did not deign to answer me, but pointed to a mahogany door. I entered, and found myself in a large well-furnished room, fitted up with desks. At the end two young men were fencing. Another, seated at a round table, covered with papers, was copying music, and occasionally trying a note on his guitar. A fourth was throwing himself into attitudes before a pier-glass; and the fifth, who was the only one whose employment was in any degree of a political nature, was seated at his desk, reading the newspaper.

No one noticed my entrance. I looked in vain for my father, and with some astonishment at those I found in his place. Then I enquired for Baron Fleming, and, for the second time in one day, I did not receive any answer. I repeated my query in a more audible tone, and the young gentleman who was reading the newspaper, without taking his eyes off the columns, demanded in a curt voice what I wanted with him.

'What is that to you?' I ingenuously asked.

This unusual reply excited attention. They all looked at me; and when they had looked at me, they looked at each other and smiled. My appearance, indeed, of which till I had seen myself in the pier-glass I was not sensible, was well calculated to excite a smile and to attract a stare. My clothes were not untattered, and were very much soiled, being covered with shreds of moss and blades of grass, and stuck over with thistle-tops; my boots had not been cleaned for a week; my shirt-frill, which fell over my shoulders, was torn and dirtied; my dishevelled and unbrushed locks reached my neck, and could scarcely be said to be covered by the small forester's cap which I always wore at school, and in which I had decamped. Animate the countenance of this strange figure with that glow of health which can only be obtained by the pedestrian, and which seemed to shock the nerves of this company of dapper youths.

'If you want Baron Fleming, then, you must go upstairs,' said the student of the newspaper in a peevish voice.

As I shut the door I heard the burst of laughter. I mounted the great staircase and came into an antechamber.

'What do you want, sir? what do you want, sir? You must not come here,' said a couple of pompous messengers, nearly pushing me out.

'I shall not go away,' I replied. 'I want Baron Fleming.'

'Engaged, young gentleman, engaged; can't see any one, impossible.'

'I shall wait, then.'

'No use waiting, young gentleman, better go.'

'It is not such an easy matter, I perceive, to see one's father,' I thought to myself.

I did not know which was his room, otherwise I would have gone in; but turning round, I detected written on a door, 'Under Secretary's Office,' and I ran to it.

'Stop, sir, stop,' said the messengers.

But I had hold of the lock. They pulled me, I kicked the door, and out came the private secretary of the under secretary.

'What is all this?' asked the private secretary. He was a fit companion for the young gentleman I had left downstairs.

'I want Baron Fleming,' I replied, 'and these men will not tell me where he is, and therefore I come to the under secretary to ask.' So saying, I indignantly freed my arm from the capture of one of the messengers, and kicked the shin of the other.

'May I ask who you are?' demanded the private secretary.

'I am Baron Contarini Fleming,' I replied.

'Pray sit down,' said the private secretary, 'I will be with you in a moment.'

The two messengers darted back, and continued bowing without turning their backs until they unexpectedly reached the end of the room.

The private secretary returned with the under secretary. The under secretary told me that my father was engaged with a chancellor, and that his door was locked, but that the moment the door was unlocked, and the chancellor departed, he would take care that he was informed of my arrival. In the meantime, as he himself had a deputation to receive in his room, who were to come to-day to complain in form of what they had for months been complaining informally, he begged that I would have the kindness to accompany his private secretary to the room downstairs.

The room downstairs I again entered. The private secretary introduced me. All looked very confused, and the young gentleman who was still reading the newspaper immediately handed it to me. I had never read a newspaper in my life, but I accepted his offer to show my importance. As I did not understand politics I turned to the back of the sheet, where there is generally an article on the fine arts, or a review of a new book. My wandering eye fixed upon a memoir of the Chevalier de Winter. I was equally agitated and astonished. My eye quivered over the page. I saw in an instant enough to convince me it was my friend, and that my friend was styled 'a great ornament to the country,' and the Northmen were congratulated on at length producing an artist whom the Italians themselves acknowledged unrivalled among the living. I learnt that he was the son of a peasant; how his genius for painting early developed itself; how he had led for years an eccentric and wandering life; how he had returned to Rome, and at once produced a masterpiece; how he had gained prizes in academies; how he was esteemed and honoured by

foreign princes; how his own illustrious monarch, ever alive to the patronage of the fine arts, had honoured him with two commissions; how he had returned to his native country with these magnificent pictures, which were daily exhibiting in the Royal Academy of Arts; how the king had conferred on him the collar of a high order, and offered him a great pension; how he had refused the pension, and requested only that a competence might be settled on his parents.

I was bewildered; I fell into a deep reverie, the paper dropped from my hand, the door opened, and the private secretary summoned me to the presence of my father.

CHAPTER XXI.

An Important Interview.

IT IS time that you should know something of my father. You must remember that he was little more than a score of years my senior. Imagine, then, a man of about four and thirty years of age, tall and thin, handsome and elegant, pensive and pale. His clear, broad brow, his aquiline, but delicately-chiselled nose, his grey, deep-set, and penetrating eye, and his compressed lips, altogether formed a countenance which enchanted women and awed men.

His character is more difficult to delineate. It was perhaps inscrutable. I will attempt to sketch it, as it might then have appeared to those who considered themselves qualified to speculate upon human nature.

His talents were of high order, and their exercise alone had occasioned his rise in a country in which he had no interest and no connexions. He had succeeded in everything he had undertaken. As an orator, as a negotiator, and in all the details of domestic administration, he was alike eminent; and his luminous interpretation of national law had elevated the character

of his monarch in the opinion of Europe, and had converted a second-rate power into the mediator between the highest.

The minister of a free people, he was the personal as well as the political pupil of Metternich. Yet he respected the institutions of his country, because they existed, and because experience proved that under their influence the natives had become more powerful machines.

His practice of politics was compressed in two words, subtlety and force. The minister of an emperor, he would have maintained his system by armies; in the cabinet of a small kingdom, he compensated for his deficiency by intrigue.

His perfection of human nature was a practical man. He looked upon a theorist either with alarm or with contempt. Proud in his own energies, and conscious that he owed everything to his own dexterity, he believed all to depend upon the influence of individual character. He required men not to think but to act, not to examine but to obey; and, animating their brute force with his own intelligence, he found the success, which he believed could never be attained by the rational conduct of an enlightened people.

Out of the cabinet the change of his manner might perplex the superficial. The moment that he entered society his thoughtful face would break into a fascinating smile, and he listened with interest to the tales of levity, and joined with readiness in each frivolous pursuit. He was sumptuous in his habits, and was said to be even voluptuous. Perhaps he affected gallantry, because he was deeply impressed with the influence of women both upon public and upon private

opinion. With them he was a universal favourite; and as you beheld him assenting with conviction to their gay or serious nonsense, and gracefully waving his handkerchief in his delicate and jewelled hand, you might have supposed him for a moment a consummate lord chamberlain; but only for a moment, for had you caught his eye, you would have withdrawn your gaze with precipitation, and perhaps with awe. For the rest, he spoke all languages, never lost his self-possession, and never, in my recollection, had displayed a spark of strong feeling.

I loved my father deeply, but my love was mixed with more than reverence; it was blended with fear. He was the only person before whom I ever quailed. To me he had been universally kind. I could not recall, in the whole period of my existence, a single harsh word directed to myself that had ever escaped him. Whenever he saw me he smiled and nodded; and sometimes, in early days, when I requested an embrace, he had pressed my lips. As I grew in years everything was arranged that could conduce to my happiness. Whatever I desired was granted; whatever wish I expressed was gratified. Yet with all this, by some means or other which I could not comprehend, the intercourse between my father and myself seemed never to advance. I was still to him as much an infant as if I were yet a subject of the nursery; and the impending and important interview might be considered the first time that it was ever my fortune to engage with him in serious converse.

The door was opened; my heart palpitated; the private secretary withdrew; I entered the lofty room. My father was writing. He did not look up as I came in. I stood at his table a second, he raised his

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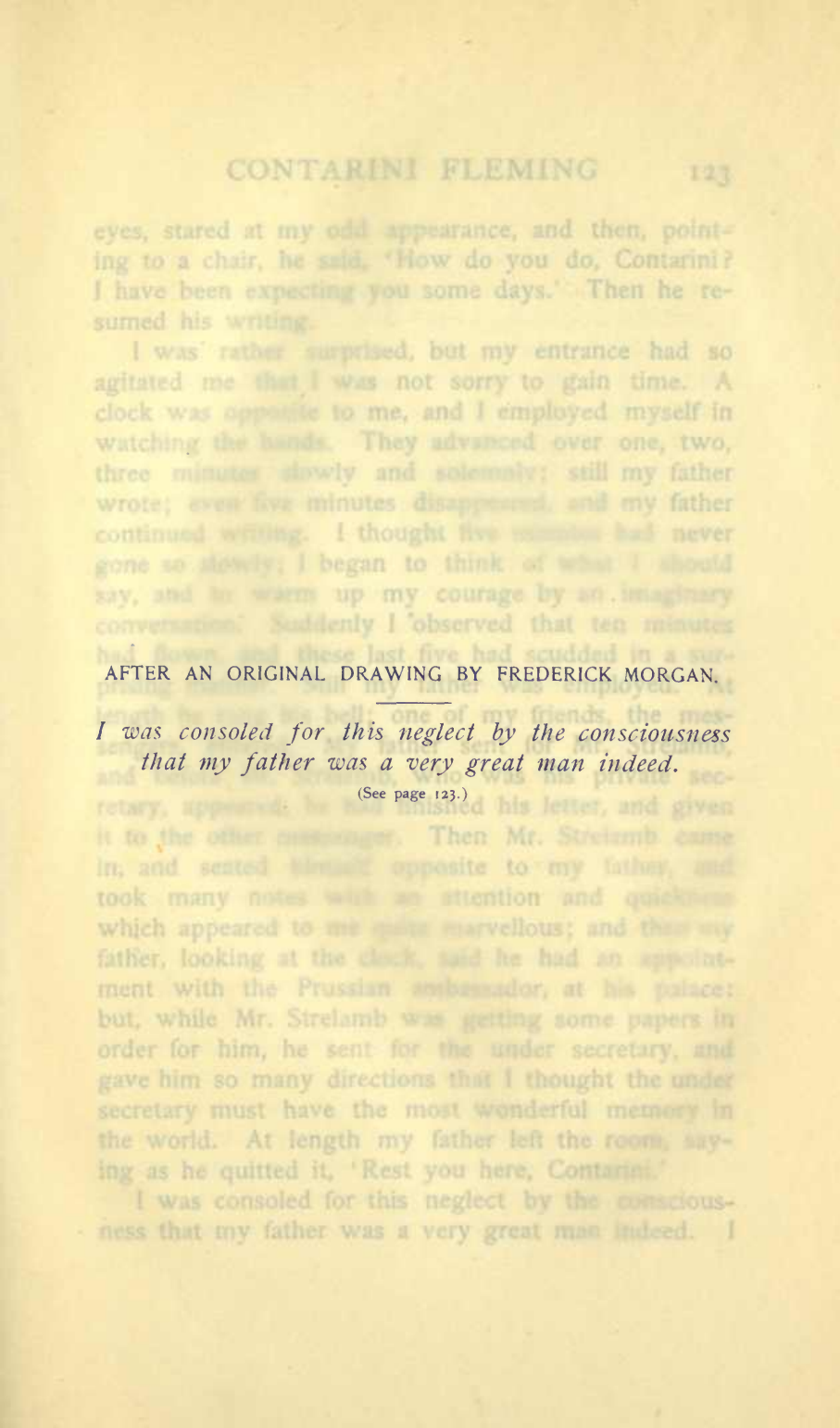


AFTER AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY FREDERICK MORGAN.

I was consoled for this neglect by the consciousness that my father was a very great man indeed.

(See page 123.)

eyes, stared at my odd appearance, and then, pointing to a chair, he said, 'How do you do, Contarini? I have been expecting you some days.' Then he resumed his writing.

I was rather surprised, but my entrance had so agitated me that I was not sorry to gain time. A clock was opposite to me, and I employed myself in watching the hands. They advanced over one, two, three minutes slowly and solemnly; still my father wrote; even five minutes disappeared, and my father continued writing. I thought five minutes had never gone so slowly; I began to think of what I should say, and to warm up my courage by an imaginary conversation. Suddenly I observed that ten minutes had flown, and these last five had scudded in a surprising manner. Still my father was employed. At length he rang his bell; one of my friends, the messengers, entered. My father sent for Mr. Strelamb, and before Mr. Strelamb, who was his private secretary, appeared, he had finished his letter, and given it to the other messenger. Then Mr. Strelamb came in, and seated himself opposite to my father, and took many notes with an attention and quickness which appeared to me quite marvellous; and then my father, looking at the clock, said he had an appointment with the Prussian ambassador, at his palace: but, while Mr. Strelamb was getting some papers in order for him, he sent for the under secretary, and gave him so many directions that I thought the under secretary must have the most wonderful memory in the world. At length my father left the room, saying as he quitted it, 'Rest you here, Contarini.'

I was consoled for this neglect by the consciousness that my father was a very great man indeed. I

had no idea of such a great man. I was filled with awe. I looked out of window to see him mount his horse; but, just as he had got one foot in the stirrup, a carriage dashed up to the door; my father withdrew his foot, and, saluting the person in the carriage, entered it. It was the Austrian ambassador. In ten minutes he came out; but just as the steps were rattled up, and the chasseur had closed the door with his best air, my father returned to the carriage; but he remained only a minute, and then, mounting his horse, galloped off.

'This is, indeed, a great man,' I thought, 'and I am his son.' I began to muse upon this idea of political greatness. The simple woodman, and his decorous cottage, and his free forest life recurred to my mind, unaccompanied by that feeling of satisfaction which I had hitherto associated with them, and were pictured in faded and rather insipid colours. Poetry and philosophy, and the delights of solitude, and the beauty of truth, and the rapture of creation, I know not how it was, they certainly did not figure in such paramount beauty and colossal importance as I had previously viewed them. I thought of my harassing hours of doubt and diffidence with disgust; I sickened at the time wasted over imperfect efforts at what, when perfect, seemed somehow of questionable importance. I was dissatisfied with my past life. Ambassadors and chancellors, under secretaries and private secretaries and public messengers flitted across my vision. I was sensibly struck at the contrast between all this greatness achieved, and moving before me in its quick and proud reality, and my weak meditations of unexecuted purposes, and dreamy visions of imaginary grandeur. I threw myself in my father's chair,

took up a pen, and insensibly to myself while I indulged in these reflections, scribbled Contarini Fleming over every paper that offered itself for my signature.

My father was a long while away. I fell into a profound reverie; he entered the room; I did not observe him; I was entirely lost. I was engaged in a conversation with both the Prussian and Austrian ambassadors together. My father called me; I did not hear him. My eyes were fixed on vacancy, but I was listening with the greatest attention to their Excellencies. My father approached, lifted me gently from his seat, and placed me in my original chair. I stared, looked up, and shook myself like a man awakened. He slightly smiled, and then seating himself, shrugging up his shoulders at my labours, and arranging his papers, he said at the same time—

'Now, Contarini, I wish you to tell me why you have left your college?'

This was a home query, and entirely brought me to myself. With the greatest astonishment I found that I had no answer. I did not speak, and my father commenced writing. In two or three instants he said, 'Well, can you answer my question?'

'Yes, sir,' I replied, to gain time.

'Well! tell me.'

'Because, sir, because it was no use staying there.'

'Why?'

'Because I learned nothing.'

'Were you the first boy in the school, or the last? Had you learnt everything that they could teach you, or nothing?'

'I was neither first nor last; not that I should be ashamed of being last where I consider it no honour to be first.'

'Why not?'

'Because I do not think it an enviable situation to be the first among the learners of words.'

My father gave me a sharp glance, and then said, 'Did you leave college because you considered that they taught you only words?'

'Yes, sir; and because I wish to learn ideas.'

'Some silly book has filled your head, Contarini, with these ridiculous notions about the respective importance of words and ideas. Few ideas are correct ones, and what are correct no one can ascertain; but with words we govern men.'

This observation completely knocked up all my philosophy, and I was without an answer.

'I tell you what, Contarini: I suspect that there must be some other reason for this step of yours. I wish you to tell it to me. If you were not making there that progress which every intelligent youth desires, such a circumstance might be a very good reason for your representing your state to your parent, and submitting it to his consideration; but you—you have never complained to me upon the subject. You said nothing of the kind when you were last with me; you never communicated it by letter. I never heard of a boy running away from school because they did not teach him sufficient, or sufficiently well. Your instructors do not complain of your conduct, except with regard to this step. There must be some other reason which induced you to adopt a measure which, I flatter myself, you have already learnt to consider as both extremely unauthorised and very injudicious.'

I had a good mind to pour it all out. I had a good mind to dash Venice in his teeth, and let him chew it as he could. I was on the point of asking a

thousand questions, for a solution of which I had been burning all my life, but the force of early impressions was too strong. I shunned the fatal word, and remained silent, with a clouded brow, and my eyes fixed upon the ground.

'Answer me, Contarini,' he continued; 'you know that all I ask is only for your good. Answer me, Contarini; I request that you answer me. Were you uncomfortable? Were you unhappy?'

'I am always unhappy,' I replied, in a gloomy tone.

My father moved round his chair. 'You astonish me, Contarini! Unhappy! always unhappy! Why are you unhappy? I should have thought you the happiest boy of my acquaintance. I am sure I cannot conceive what makes you unhappy. Pray tell me. Is there anything you want? Have I done, has anybody done anything to annoy you? Have you anything upon your mind?'

I did not answer; my eyes were still fixed upon the ground, the tears stealing down my cheek, tears not of tenderness but rage.

'My dear Contarini,' continued my father, 'I must indeed earnestly request you to answer me. Throughout life you have never disobeyed me. Do not let to-day be an epoch of rebellion. Speak to me frankly; tell me why you are unhappy.'

'Because I have no one I love, because there is no one who loves me, because I hate this country, because I hate everything and everybody, because I hate myself.' I rose from my seat and stamped about the room.

My father was perfectly astounded. He had thought that I might possibly have got into debt, or had a silly quarrel; but he did not lose his self-command.

'Sit down, Contarini,' he said, calmly. 'Never give way to your feelings. Explain to me quietly what all this means. What book have you been reading to fill your head with all this nonsense? What could have so suddenly altered your character?'

'I have read no book; my character is what it always was, and I have only expressed to-day, for the first time, what I have ever felt. Life is intolerable to me, and I wish to die.'

'What can you mean by persons not loving you?' resumed my father; 'I am sure the Baroness——'

'The Baroness!' I interrupted him in a sharp tone —'what is the Baroness to me? Always this wretched nursery view of life, always considered an insignificant, unmeaning child! What is the Baroness and her petty persecutions to me? Pah!'

I grew bold. The truth is my vanity was flattered by finding the man who was insensible to all, and before whom all trembled, yield his sympathy and his time to me. I began to get interested in the interview. I was excited by this first conversation with a parent. My suppressed character began unconsciously to develop itself, and I unintentionally gave way to my mind, as if I were in one of my own scenes.

'I should be sorry if there were even petty persecutions,' said my father, 'and equally so if you were insensible to them; but I hope that you speak only under excited feelings. For your father, Contarini, I can at least answer that his conscience cannot accuse him of a deficiency in love for one who has such strong claims upon a father's affection. I can indeed say that I have taken no important step in life which had not for its ulterior purpose your benefit; and

what, think you, can sweeten this all-engrossing and and perhaps fatal labour, to which I am devoted, but the thought that I am toiling for the future happiness of my child? You are young, Contarini. Some day you will become acquainted with the feelings of a father, and you will then blush with shame and remorse that you ever accused me of insensibility.'

While he spoke I was greatly softened. The tears stole down my cheek. I leant my arm upon the table, and tried to shade my face with my hand. My father rose from his seat, turned the key of the door, and resumed his place.

'Occupied with affairs,' he resumed, 'which do not always allow me sleep, I have never found time for those slight parental offices which I do not think less delightful because it has been my misfortune not to fulfil or to enjoy them. But you, Contarini, have never been absent from my thoughts, and I had considered that I had made such arrangements as must secure you the gratification of every innocent desire. But to-day I find, for the first time, that I have been mistaken for years. I regret it; I wish, if possible, to compensate for my unhappy neglect, or rather unfortunate ignorance. Tell me, Contarini, what do you wish me to do?'

'Nothing, nothing,' I sobbed and sighed.

'But if necessity have hitherto brought us less together than I could wish, you are now, Contarini, fast advancing to that period of life to which I looked forward as a consolatory recompense for this deplorable estrangement. I hoped to find in you a companion. I hoped that I might have the high gratification of forming you into a great and a good man, that I might find in my son not merely a being to be

cherished, but a friend, a counsellor, a colleague, yes! Contarini, perhaps a successor.'

I clasped my hands in agony, but restrained a cry.

'And now,' he continued, 'I am suddenly told, and by himself, that I have never loved him; but still more painful, still more heartrending, is the accompanying declaration, which, indeed, is what I could not be prepared for. Misconception on his part, however improbable, might have accounted for his crediting my coldness; but alas! I have no room for hope or doubt. His plain avowal can never be misconstrued. I must then yield to the terrible conviction that I am an object of abhorrence to my child.'

I flung myself at his feet, I seized his hand, I kissed it, and bathed it with my tears.

'Spare me, oh! spare me!' I faintly muttered. 'Henceforth I will be all you wish!' I clung upon his hand, I would not rise till he pardoned me. 'Pardon me,' I said, 'pardon me, I beseech you, father, for I spoke in madness. Pardon me, pardon me, dear father! It was in madness, for indeed there is something which comes over me sometimes like madness, but now it will never come, because you love me. Only tell me that you love me, and I will always do everything. I am most grieved for what I said about the Baroness. She is too good! I will never give you again an uneasy moment, not a single uneasy moment. Now that I know that you love me, you may depend upon me, you may indeed. You may depend upon me forever!'

He smiled, and raised me from the ground, and kissed my forehead. 'Compose yourself, dearest boy. Strelamb must soon come in. Try more to repress your feelings. There, sit down, and calm yourself.'

He resumed his writing directly, and I sat sobbing myself into composure. In about a quarter of an hour, he said, 'I *must* send for Strelamb now, Contarini. If you go into the next room, you can wash your face.'

When I returned, my father said, 'Come! come! you look quite blooming. By-the-bye, you are aware what a very strange figure you are, Contarini? After being closeted all the morning with me, they will think, from your costume, that you are a foreign ambassador. Now go home and dress, for I have a large dinner party to-day, and I wish you to dine with me. There are several persons whom you should know. And, if you like, you may take my horses, for I had rather walk home.'

CHAPTER XXII.

I Enter Society.

I WAS so very happy that, for some time, I did not think of the appalling effort that awaited me. It was not till I had fairly commenced dressing that I remembered that in the course of an hour, for the first time in my life, I was to enter a room full of strangers, conducting themselves with ease, in all that etiquette of society in which I was entirely unpractised. My heart misgave me. I wished myself again in the forest. I procrastinated my toilet to the last possible moment. Ignorant of the art of dress, I found myself making a thousand experiments, all of which failed. The more I consulted my glass the less favourable was the impression. I brushed my hair out of curl. I confined my neck for the first time in a cravat. Each instant my appearance became more awkward, more formal, and more ineffective. At last I was obliged to go down; and, less at my ease, and conscious of appearing worse than ever I did in my life, at the only moment of that life in which appearance had been of the slightest consequence and had ever occupied my thoughts, I entered the room

at a side door. It was very full, as I had expected. I stole in without being observed, which a little reanimated my courage. I looked round in vain for a person I knew; I crept to a corner. All seemed at their ease. All were smiling; all exchanging words, if not ideas. The women all appeared beautiful, the men all elegant. I painfully felt my wretched inferiority. I watched the Baroness, magnificently attired and sparkling with diamonds, wreathed with smiles, and scattering without effort phrases which seemed to diffuse universal pleasure. This woman, whom I had presumed to despise and dared to insult, became to me an object of admiration and of envy. She even seemed to me beautiful. I was bewildered.

Suddenly a gentleman approached me. It was the under secretary. I was delighted by his notice. I answered his many uninteresting questions about every school pastime, which I detested, as if I felt the greatest interest in their recollection. All that I desired was that he would not leave me, that I might at least appear to be doing what the others were, and might be supposed to be charmed, although I was in torture. At length he walked off to another group, and I found myself once more alone, apparently without a single chance of keeping up the ball. I felt as if every one were watching with wonder the strange, awkward, ugly, silent boy. I coined my cheek into a base smile, but I found that it would not pass. I caught the eye of the Baroness; she beckoned me to come to her. I joined her without delay. She introduced me to a lady who was sitting at her side. This lady had a son at the college, and asked me many questions. I answered in a nervous, rapid manner, as if her son were my most intimate

friend, gave the anxious mother a complete detail of all his occupations, and praised the institution up to the seventh heaven. I was astonished at the tone of affection with which the Baroness addressed me, at the interest which she took in everything that concerned me. It was ever 'Contarini, dear,' 'Contarini, my love,' 'You have been riding to-day. Where have you been? I have hardly had time to speak to you. He only came home to-day. He is looking vastly well.' 'Very well, indeed.' 'Very much grown.' 'Oh! amazingly.' 'Quite a beau for you, Baroness.' 'Oh! yes, quite delightful.'

What amiable people! I thought, and what would I give to be once more in old Winter's cottage!

The door opened; the Chevalier de Winter was announced. My fellow-traveller entered the room, though I could scarcely recognise him in his rich and even fanciful dress, and adorned with his brilliant order. I was struck with his fine person, his noble carriage, and his highly-polished manner. Except my father, I had never seen so true a nobleman. The Baron went forward to receive him with his most courteous air and most fascinating smile. I withdrew as he led him to my mother. I watched the Baroness as she rose to greet him. I was surprised at the warmth of her welcome, and the tone of consideration with which she received him. Some of the guests, who were the highest nobles in the country, requested my father to present them to him: with others Winter was already acquainted, and they seemed honoured by his recognition.

'This also is a great man,' I exclaimed, 'but of a different order.' Old feelings began to boil up from the abyss in which I had plunged them. I sympa-

thised with this great and triumphant artist. In a few days it seemed that the history of genius had been acted before me for my instruction, and for my encouragement. A combination of circumstances had allowed me to trace this man from his first hopeless obscurity. I had seen all; the strong predisposition, the stubborn opposition of fortune, the first efforts, the first doubts, the paramount conviction, the long struggle, the violated ties, the repeated flights, the deep studies, the sharp discipline, the great creation, and the glorious triumph.

My father, crossing the room, saw me. 'Contarini,' he said, 'where have you been all this time? I have been often looking for you. Come with me, and I will introduce you to the Chevalier de Winter, one of the first painters in the world, who has just come from Rome. You must go and see his pictures; every one is talking of them. Always know eminent men, and always be master of the subject of the day. Chevalier,' for we had now come up to him, 'my son desires your acquaintance.'

'Ah! fellow-traveller, welcome, welcome; I told you we should soon meet again,' and he pressed my hand with warmth.

'Sir, I had a prescience that I had been the companion of a great man.'

This was pretty well said for a bashful youth, but it was really not a compliment. The moment I addressed Winter, I resumed unconsciously my natural tone, and reminded by his presence that higher accomplishments and qualities existed than a mere acquaintance with etiquette, and the vivacity which could enliven the passages of ordinary conversation, I began to feel a little more at my ease.

Dinner was announced. The table was round. I sat between the under secretary and the lady to whom I had been introduced. The scene was a novel one, and I was astonished at observing a magnificent repast, which all seemed to pique themselves upon tasting as little as possible. They evidently assemble here, then, I thought, for the sake of conversation; yet how many are silent, and what is said might be omitted. But I was then ignorant of the purposes for which human beings are brought together. My female companion, who was a little wearied by a great general, who, although a hero and a strategist, was soon beaten and bewildered in a campaign of repartee, turned round to amuse herself with her other supporter. Her terrific child was again introduced. I had drunk a glass or two of wine, and altogether had, in a great degree, recovered my self-possession. I could support her tattle no longer. I assured the astonished mother that I had never even heard of her son; that, if really at college, he must be in a different part of the establishment, and that I had never met him; that I did not even know the name; that the college was a very bad college indeed, that nobody learnt anything there, that I abhorred it, and hoped that I should never return; and then I asked her to do me the honour of taking wine.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Chevalier's Advice.

THE day after the party, I went with the Baroness to see the great pictures of Winter in the Royal Academy of Arts. Both of them seemed to be magnificent; but one, which was a national subject, and depicted the emancipating exploits of one of the heroic monarchs, was the most popular. I did not feel so much interested with this. I did not sympathise with the gloomy savage scene, the black pine forests, the rough mountains, the feudal forms and dresses; but the other, which was of a different character, afforded me exquisite delight. It represented a procession going up to sacrifice at a temple in a Grecian isle. The brilliant colouring, the beautiful and beautifully-clad forms, the delicate Ionian fane, seated on a soft acclivity covered with sunny trees, the classical and lovely background, the deep-blue sea, broken by a tall white scudding-sail, and backed by undulating and azure mountains; I stood before it in a trance; a crowd of ideas swiftly gathered in my mind. It was a poem.

After this I called upon Winter and found him in his studio. Many persons were there, and of high

degree. It was the first time I had ever been in the studio of an artist. I was charmed with all I saw; the infinite sketches, the rough studies, the unfinished pictures, the lay figure, the beautiful cast, and here and there some choice relic of antiquity, a torso, a bust, or a gem. I remained here the whole morning examining his Venetian sketches, and a day seldom passed over that I did not drop in to pay my devotions at this delightful temple.

I was indeed so much at home, that if he were engaged, I resumed my portfolio without notice, so that in time I knew perhaps more about Venice than many persons who had passed their whole lives there.

When I had been at home a fortnight, my father one day invited me to take a ride with him, and began conversing with me on my plans. He said that he did not wish me to return to college, but that he thought me at least a year too young to repair to the university, whither on every account he desired me to go. 'We should consider then,' he continued, 'how this interval can be turned to the greatest advantage. I wish you to mix as much as is convenient with society. I apprehend that you have, perhaps, hitherto indulged a little too much in lonely habits. Young men are apt to get a little abstracted, and occasionally to think that there is something singular in their nature, when the fact is, if they were better acquainted with their fellow-creatures, they would find they were mistaken. This is a common error, indeed the commonest. I am not at all surprised that you have fallen into it. All have. The most practical, business-like men that exist have, many of them, when children, conceived themselves totally disqualified to struggle in the world. You may rest assured

of this. I could mention many remarkable instances. All persons, when young, are fond of solitude, and when they are beginning to think, are sometimes surprised at their own thoughts. There is nothing to be deplored, scarcely to be feared, in this. It almost always wears off; but sometimes it happens that they have not judicious friends by them to explain, that the habits which they think peculiar are universal, and, if unreasonably indulged, can ultimately only turn them into indolent, insignificant members of society, and occasion them lasting unhappiness.'

I made no reply, but gave up all idea of writing a tale, which was to embrace both Venice and Greece, and which I had been for some days meditating.

'But to enter society with pleasure, Contarini, you must be qualified for it. I think it quite time for you to make yourself master of some accomplishments. Decidedly you should make yourself a good dancer. Without dancing you can never attain a perfectly graceful carriage, which is of the highest importance in life, and should be every man's ambition. You are yet too young fully to comprehend how much in life depends upon manner. Whenever you see a man who is successful in society, try to discover what makes him pleasing, and if possible adopt his system. You should learn to fence. For languages, at present, French will be sufficient. You speak it fairly; try to speak it elegantly. Read French authors. Read Rochefoucault. The French writers are the finest in the world, for they clear our heads of all ridiculous ideas. Study precision.

'Do not talk too much at present; do not *try* to talk. But whenever you speak, speak with self-possession. Speak in a subdued tone, and always look

at the person whom you are addressing. Before one can engage in general conversation with any effect, there is a certain acquaintance with trifling but amusing subjects which must be first attained. You will soon pick up sufficient by listening and observing. Never argue. In society nothing must be discussed; give only results. If any person differ from you, bow and turn the conversation. In society never think; always be on the watch, or you will miss many opportunities and say many disagreeable things.

'Talk to women, talk to women as much as you can. This is the best school. This is the way to gain fluency, because you need not care what you say, and had better not be sensible. They, too, will rally you on many points, and as they are women you will not be offended. Nothing is of so much importance and of so much use to a young man entering life as to be well criticised by women. It is impossible to get rid of those thousand bad habits which we pick up in boyhood, without this supervision. Unfortunately you have no sisters. But never be offended if a woman rally you; encourage her, otherwise you will never be free from your awkwardness or any little oddities, and certainly never learn to dress.

'You ride pretty well, but you had better go through the manège. Every gentleman should be a perfect cavalier. You shall have your own groom and horses, and I wish you to ride regularly every day.

'As you are to be at home for so short a time, and for other reasons, I think it better that you should not have a tutor in the house. Parcel out your morning, then, for your separate masters. Rise early and

regularly and read for three hours. Read the Memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz, the Life of Richelieu, everything about Napoleon: read works of that kind. Strelamb shall prepare you a list. Read no history, nothing but biography, for that is life without theory. Then fence. Talk an hour with your French master, but do not throw the burden of the conversation upon him. Give him an account of something. Describe to him the events of yesterday, or give him a detailed account of the constitution. You will have then sufficiently rested yourself for your dancing. And after that ride and amuse yourself as much as you can. Amusement to an observing mind is study.'

I pursued the system which my father had pointed out with exactness, and soon with pleasure. I sacredly observed my hours of reading, and devoted myself to the study of the lives of what my father considered really great men; that is to say, men of great energies and violent volition, who look upon their fellow-creatures as mere tools, with which they can build up a pedestal for their solitary statue, and who sacrifice every feeling which should sway humanity, and every high work which genius should really achieve, to the short-sighted gratification of an irrational and outrageous selfism. As for my manners, I flattered myself that they advanced in measure with my mind, although I already emulated Napoleon. I soon overcame the fear which attended my first experiments in society, and by scrupulously observing the paternal maxims, I soon became very self-satisfied. I listened to men with a delightful mixture of deference and self-confidence: were they old, and did I differ from them, I contented myself by positively stating my opinion in a subdued voice, and then either turning

the subject or turning upon my heel. But as for women, it is astonishing how well I got on. The nervous rapidity of my first rattle soon subsided into a continuous flow of easy nonsense. Impertinent and flippant, I was universally hailed an original and a wit. But the most remarkable incident was, that the Baroness and myself became the greatest friends. I was her constant attendant and rehearsed to her flattered ear all my evening performance. She was the person with whom I practised, and as she had a taste in dress I encouraged her opinions. Unconscious that she was at once my lay figure and my mirror, she loaded me with presents, and announced to all her coterie that I was the most delightful young man of her acquaintance.

From all this it may easily be suspected that at the age of fifteen I had unexpectedly become one of the most affected, conceited, and intolerable atoms that ever peopled the sunbeam of society.

A few days before I quitted home for the university, I paid a farewell visit to Winter, who was himself on the point of returning to Rome.

'Well, my dear Chevalier,' I said, seizing his hand, and speaking in a voice of affected interest, 'I could not think of leaving town without seeing you. I am off to-morrow, and you; you, too, are going. But what a difference; a Gothic university and immortal Rome! Pity me, my dear Chevalier,' and I shrugged my shoulders.

'Oh! yes, certainly; I think you are to be pitied.'

'And how does the great work go on? Your name is everywhere. I assure you, Prince Besborodko was speaking to me last night of nothing else. By-the-bye, shall you be at the opera to-night?'

'I do not know.'

'Oh! you must go. I am sorry I have not a box to offer you. But the Baroness's, I am sure, is always at your service.'

'You are vastly kind.'

''Tis the most charming opera. I think his masterpiece. That divine air; I hum it all day. I do indeed. What a genius! I can bear no one else. Decidedly the greatest composer that ever existed.'

'He is certainly very great, and you are no doubt an excellent judge of his style; but the air you meant to hum is an introduction, and by Pacini.'

'Is it, indeed? Ah! Italy is the land of music. We men of the north must not speak of it.'

'Why is Italy the land of music? Why not Germany?'

'Perhaps music is more cultivated in Germany at present, but do not you think that it is, as it were, more indigenous in Italy?'

'No.'

As I never argued, I twirled my cane, and asked his opinion of a new casino.

'Ah! by-the-bye, is it true, Chevalier, that you have at last agreed to paint the Princess Royal? I tell you what I recommend you seriously to do, most seriously, I assure you most decidedly it is my opinion; most important thing, indeed,—should not be neglected a day. Certainly I should not think of going to Italy without doing it.'

'Well! Well!'

'Countess Arnfeldt, Chevalier. By heavens, she is divine! What a neck, and what a hand! A perfect study.'

'Poh!'

'Do not you really think so? Well, I see I am terribly breaking into your morning. Adieu! Let us hope we may soon meet again. Perhaps at Rome; who knows? Au revoir.'

I kissed my hand and tripped out of the room in all the charming fulness of a perfectly graceful manner.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

The First Prize.

OUR schoolboy days are looked back to by all with fondness. Oppressed with the cares of life, we contrast our worn and harassed existence with that sweet prime, free from anxiety and fragrant with innocence. I cannot share these feelings. I was a most miserable child; and school I detested more than ever I abhorred the world in the darkest moments of my experienced manhood. But the university, this new life yielded me different feelings, and still commands a grateful reminiscence.

My father, who studied to foster in me every worldly feeling, sought all means which might tend to make me enamoured of that world to which he was devoted. An extravagant allowance, a lavish establishment, many servants, numerous horses, were forced upon rather than solicited by me. According to his system he acted dexterously. My youthful brain could not be insensible to the brilliant position

in which I was placed. I was now, indeed, my own master, and everything around me announced that I could command a career flattering to the rising passions of my youth. I well remember the extreme self-complacency with which I surveyed my new apartments; how instantaneously I was wrapped up in all the mysteries of furniture, and how I seemed to have no other purpose in life than to play the honoured and honourable part of an elegant and accomplished host.

My birth, my fortune, my convivial habits rallied around me the noble and the gay, the flower of our society. Joyously flew our careless hours, while we mimicked the magnificence of men. I had no thought but for the present moment. I discoursed only of dogs and horses, of fanciful habiliments, and curious repasts. I astonished them by a new fashion, and decided upon the exaggerated charms of some ordinary female. How long the novelty of my life would have been productive of interest I know not. An incident occurred which changed my habits.

A new Professor arrived at the university. He was by birth a German. I attended, by accident, his preliminary lecture on Grecian history. I had been hunting, and had suddenly returned home. Throwing my gown over my forest frock, I strolled, for the sake of change, into the theatre. I nodded with a smile to some of my acquaintance; I glanced with listlessness at their instructor. His abstracted look, the massiness of his skull, his large luminous eye, his long grey hair, his earnest and impassioned manner, struck me. He discoursed on that early portion of Grecian history which is entirely unknown. I was astonished at the fulness of his knowledge. That which to a common

student appears but an inexplicable or barren tradition, became, in his magical mould, a record teeming with deep knowledge and picturesque interest. Hordes, who hitherto were only dimly distinguished wandering over the deserts of antiquity, now figured as great nations, multiplying in beautiful cities, and moving in the grand and progressive march of civilisation; and I listened to animated narratives of their creeds, their customs, their manners, their philosophy, and their arts. I was deeply impressed with this mystical creation of a critical spirit. I was charmed with the blended profundity and imagination. I revelled in the sagacious audacity of his revolutionary theories. I yielded to the full spell of his archaic eloquence. The curtain was removed from the sacred shrine of antique ages, and an inspired prophet, ministering in the sanctuary, expounded the mysteries which had perplexed the imperfect intelligence of their remote posterity.

The lecture ceased; I was the first who broke into plaudits; I advanced; I offered to our master my congratulations and my homage. Now that his office had finished I found him the meekest, the most modest and nervous being that ever trembled in society. With difficulty he would receive the respectful compliments of his pupils. He bowed, and blushed, and disappeared. His reserve only interested me the more. I returned to my rooms, musing over the high matters of his discourse. Upon my table was a letter from one of my companions, full of ribald jests. I glanced at its uncongenial lines, and tossed it away unread. I fell into a reverie of Arcadian loveliness. A beautiful temple rose in my mind like the temple in the picture of Winter. The door opened; a band of loose revellers burst into their accustomed gather-

ing room. I was silent, reserved, cold, moody. Their inane observations amazed me. I shrunk from their hollow tattle and the gibberish of their foul slang. Their unmeaning, idiotic shouts of laughter tortured me. I knew not how to rid myself of their infernal presence. At length one offered me a bet, and I rushed out of the chamber.

I did not stop until I reached the room of the Professor. I found him buried in his books. He stared at my entrance. I apologised; I told him all I felt, all I wanted; the wretched life I was leading, my deep sympathy with his character, my infinite disgust at my own career, my unbounded love of knowledge, and my admiration of himself.

The simplicity of the Professor's character was not shocked by my frank enthusiasm. Had he been a man of the world he would have been alarmed, lest my strong feeling and unusual conduct should have placed us both in a ridiculous position. On the contrary, without a moment's hesitation, he threw aside his papers and opened his heart to all my wants. My imperfect knowledge of the Greek language was too apparent. Nothing could be done until I mastered it. He explained to me a novel and philosophical mode of acquiring a full acquaintance with it. As we proceeded in our conversation, he occasionally indicated the outlines of his grand system of metaphysics. I was fascinated by the gorgeous prospect of comprehending the unintelligible. The Professor was gratified by the effect that his first effusion had produced, and was interested by the ardour of my mind. He was flattered in finding an enthusiastic votary in one whose mode of life had hitherto promised anything but study, and whose position in society was per-

haps an apology, if not a reason, for an irrational career.

I announced to my companions that I was going to read. They stared, they pitied me. Some deemed the avowal affectation, and trusted that increased frolic would repay them for the abstinence of a week of application. Fleming with his books only exhibited a fresh instance of his studied eccentricity. But they were disappointed. I worked at Greek for twelve hours a day, and at the end of a month I had gained an ample acquaintance with the construction of the language, and a fuller one of its signification: so much can be done by an ardent and willing spirit. I had been for six or seven years nominally a Greek student, and had learnt nothing; and how many persons waste even six or seven more and only find themselves in the same position!

I was amply rewarded for my toilsome effort. I felt the ennobling pride of learning. It is a fine thing to know that which is unknown to others; it is still more dignified to remember that we have gained it by our own energies. The struggle after knowledge too is full of delight. The intellectual chase, not less than the material one, brings fresh vigour to our pulses, and infinite palpitations of strange and sweet suspense. The idea that is gained with effort affords far greater satisfaction than that which is acquired with dangerous facility. We dwell with more fondness on the perfume of the flower which we have ourselves tended, than on the odour of that which we cull with carelessness, and cast away without remorse. The strength and sweetness of our knowledge depend upon the impression which it makes upon our own minds. It is the liveliness of the ideas that it affords

which renders research so fascinating, so that a trifling fact or deduction, when discovered or worked out by our own brain, affords us infinitely greater pleasure than a more important truth obtained by the exertions of another.

I thought only of my books, and was happy. I was emancipated from my painful selfism. My days passed in unremitting study. My love of composition unconsciously developed itself. My note-books speedily filled, and my annotations soon swelled into treatises. Insensibly I had become an author. I wrote with facility, for I was master of my subject. I was fascinated with the expanding of my own mind. I resolved to become a great historical writer. Without intention I fixed upon subjects in which imagination might assist erudition. I formed gigantic schemes which many lives could not have accomplished: yet was I sanguine that I should achieve all. I mused over an original style, which was to blend profound philosophy and deep learning and brilliant eloquence. The nature of man and the origin of nations were to be expounded in glowing sentences of oracular majesty.

Suddenly the university announced a gold medal for the writer of the ablest treatise upon the Dorian people. The subject delighted me; for similar ones had already engaged my notice, and I determined to be a candidate.

I shut myself up from all human beings; I collected all the variety of information that I could glean from the most ancient authors, and the rarest modern treatises. I moulded the crude matter into luminous order. A theory sprang out of the confused mass, like light out of chaos. The moment of composition

commenced. I wrote the first sentence while in chapel, and under the influence of music. It sounded like the organ that inspired it. The whole was composed in my head before I committed it to paper; composed in my daily rides, and while pacing my chamber at midnight. The action of my body seemed to lend vitality to my mind.

Never shall I forget the moment when I finished the last sentence of my fair copy, and, sealing it, consigned it with a motto to the Principal. It was finished, and at the very instant my mind seemed exhausted, my power vanished. The excitement had ceased. I dashed into the forest, and, throwing myself under a tree, passed the first of many days that flew away in perfect indolence and vague and unmeaning reverie.

It spite of my great plans, which demanded the devotion of a life, and were to command the admiration of a grateful and enlightened world, I was so anxious about the fate of my prize essay that all my occupations suddenly ceased. I could do nothing. I could only think of sentences which might have been more musical, and deductions which might have been more logically true. Now that it was finished I felt its imperfectness. Week after week I grew more desponding, and on the very morning of the decision I had entirely discarded all hope.

It was announced: the medal was awarded, and to me. Amid the plaudits of a crowded theatre, I recited my triumphant essay. Full of victory, my confident voice lent additional euphony to the flowing sentence, and my bright firm eye added to the acuteness of my reasoning, and enforced the justice of my theory. I was entirely satisfied. No passage seemed

weak. Noble, wealthy, the son of the minister, congratulations came thick upon me. The seniors complimented each other on such an example to the students. I was the idol of the university. The essay was printed, lavishly praised in all the journals, and its author, full of youth and promise, hailed as the future ornament of his country. I returned to my father in a blaze of glory.

CHAPTER II.

A Magnificent Enterprise.

I ADDRESSED him with the confidence that I was now a man, and a distinguished man. My awe of his character had greatly worn off. I was most cordial to the Baroness, but a slight strain of condescension was infused into my courtesy. I had long ceased to view her with dislike; on the contrary, I had even become her protégé. That was won over. We were not less warm, but I was now the protector; and if there were a slight indication of pique or a chance ebullition of temper, instead of their calling forth any similar sentiments on my side, I only bowed with deference to her charms, or mildly smiled on the engaging weaknesses of the inferior sex. I was not less self-conceited or less affected than before, but my self-conceit and my affectation were of a nobler nature. I did not consider myself a less finished member of society, but I was also equally proud of being the historiographer of the Dorians. I was never gloomy; I was never in repose. Self-satisfaction sparkled on my countenance, and my carriage was agitated with the earnestness and the

excitement with which I busied myself with the trivial and the trite. My father smiled, half with delight and half with humour, upon my growing consciousness of importance, and introduced me to his friends with increased satisfaction. He even listened to me while, one day after dinner, I disserted upon the Pelasgi; but when he found that I believed in innate ideas, he thought that my self-delusion began to grow serious.

As he was one of those men who believed that directly to oppose a person in his opinions is a certain mode of confirming him in his error, he attacked me by a masked battery. Affecting no want of interest in my pursuits, he said to me one day in a careless tone, 'Contarini, I am no great friend to reading, but as you have a taste that way, if I were you, during the vacation, I would turn over Voltaire.'

Now I had never read any work of Voltaire's. The truth is, I had no great opinion of the philosopher of Ferney; for my friend, the Professor, had assured me that Voltaire knew nothing of the Dorians, that his Hebrew also was invariably incorrect, and that he was altogether a superficial person: but I chanced to follow my father's counsel.

I stood before the hundred volumes; I glanced with indifference upon the wondrous and witching shelf. History, poetry, philosophy, the lucid narrative, and the wild invention, and the unimpassioned truth, they were all before me, and with my ancient weakness for romance I drew out Zadig. Never shall I forget the effect this work produced on me. What I had been long seeking offered itself. This strange mixture of brilliant fantasy and poignant truth, this un-

rivalled blending of ideal creation and worldly wisdom, it all seemed to speak to my two natures. I wandered a poet in the streets of Babylon, or on the banks of the Tigris. A philosopher and a statesman, I moralised over the condition of man and the nature of government. The style enchanted me. I delivered myself up to the full abandonment of its wild and brilliant grace.

I devoured them all, volume after volume. Morning, and night, and noon, a volume was ever my companion. I ran to it after my meals, it reposed under my pillow. As I read I roared, I laughed, I shouted with wonder and admiration; I trembled with indignation at the fortunes of my race; my bitter smile sympathised with the searching ridicule and withering mockery.

Pedants, and priests, and tyrants; the folios of dunces, the fires of inquisitors, and the dungeons of kings; and the long, dull system of imposture and misrule that had sat like a gloating incubus on the fair neck of Nature; and all our ignorance, and all our weakness, and all our folly, and all our infinite imperfection. I looked round, I thought of the dissertation upon the Dorians, and I considered myself the most contemptible of my wretched species.

I returned to the university. I rallied round me my old companions, whom I had discarded in a fit of disgusting pedantry, but not now merely to hold high revels. The goblet indeed still circled, but a bust of the author of *Candide* over the head of the president warned us, with a smile of prophetic derision, not to debase ourselves; and if we drank deep, our potations were perhaps necessary to refresh the inexperienced efforts of such novices in philosophy.

Yet we made way; even the least literary read the romances, or parts of the Philosophical Dictionary; the emancipation of our minds was rapidly effecting; we entirely disembarrassed ourselves of prejudice; we tried everything by the test of first principles, and finally we resolved ourselves into a secret union for the amelioration of society.

Of this institution I had the honour of being elected president by acclamation. My rooms were the point of meeting. The members were in number twelve, chiefly my equals in rank and fortune. One or two of them were youths of talent, and not wholly untinctured by letters; the rest were ardent, delighted with the novelty of what they did and heard, and, adopting our thoughts, arrived at conclusions the truth of which they did not doubt.

My great reputation at the university long prevented these meetings from being viewed with suspicion, and when the revolutionary nature of our opinions occasionally developed itself in a disregard for the authorities by some of our society, who perhaps considered such licence as the most delightful portion of the new philosophy, my interest often succeeded in stifling a public explosion. In course of time, however, the altered tenor of my own conduct could no longer be concealed. My absence from lectures had long been overlooked, from the conviction that the time thus gained was devoted to the profundity of private study; but the systematic assembly at my rooms of those who were most eminent for their disregard of discipline and their neglect of study could no longer be treated with inattention, and after several intimations from inferior officers, I was summoned to the presence of the High Principal.

This great personage was a clear-headed, cold-minded, unmanageable individual. I could not cloud his intellect or control his purpose. My ever-successful sophistry and my ever-fluent speech failed. At the end of every appeal he recurred to his determination to maintain the discipline of the university, and repeated with firmness that this was the last time our violation of it should be privately noticed. I returned to my rooms in a dark rage. My natural impatience of control and hatred of responsibility, which had been kept off of late years by the fondness for society which developed itself with my growing passions, came back upon me. I cursed authority; I paced my room like Catiline.

At this moment my accustomed companions assembled. They were ignorant of what had passed, but they seemed to me to look like conspirators. Moody and ferocious, I headed the table, and filling a bumper, I drank confusion to all government. They were surprised at such a novel commencement, for in general we only arrived at this great result by the growing and triumphant truths of a long evening; but they received my proposition, as indeed they ever did, with a shout.

The wine warmed me. I told them all. I even exaggerated in my rage the annoying intelligence. I described our pleasant meetings, about to cease for ever. I denounced the iniquitous system, which would tear us from the pursuit of real knowledge and ennobling truths, knowledge that illuminated, and truths that should support the destinies of existing man, to the deplorable and disgusting study of a small collection of imperfect volumes, written by Greeks and preserved by Goths. It was bitter to

think that we must part. Surely society, cruel society, would too soon sever the sweet and agreeable ties that bound our youth. Why should we ever be parted? Why, in pursuance of an unnatural system, abhorred by all of us, why were we to be dispersed, and sent forth to delude the world in monstrous disguises of priests, and soldiers, and statesmen? Out upon such hypocrisy! A curse light upon the craven knave who would not struggle for his salvation from such a monotonous and degrading doom! The world was before us. Let us seize it in our prime. Let us hasten away; let us form in some inviolate solitude a society founded upon the eternal principles of truth and justice. Let us fly from the feudal system. Nobles and wealthy, let us cast our titles to the winds, and our dross to the earth which produced it. Let us pride ourselves only on the gifts of nature, and exist only on her beneficence.

I ceased, and three loud rounds of cheering announced to the High Principal and all his slaves that we had not yielded.

We drank deep. A proposition came forth with the wine of every glass. We all talked of America. Already we viewed ourselves in a primæval forest, existing by the chase, to which many of us were devoted. The very necessary toil of life seemed, in such an existence, to consist of what in this worn-out world was considered the choicest pastime and the highest pleasure. And the rich climate, and the simple manners, and the intelligible laws, and the fair aborigines who must be attracted by such interesting strangers, all hearts responded to the glowing vision. I alone was grave and thoughtful. The remembrance of Master Frederick and the Venetian expedition, al-

though now looked back to as a childish scrape, rendered me nevertheless the most practical of the party. I saw immediately the invincible difficulty of our reaching with success such a distant land. I lamented the glorious times when the forests of our own northern land could afford an asylum to the brave and free.

The young Count de Pahlen was a great hunter. Wild in his life and daring in his temper, he possessed at the same time a lively and not uncultivated intellect. He had a taste for poetry, and, among other accomplishments, was an excellent actor. He rose up as I spoke, like a volcano out of the sea. 'I have it, Fleming, I have it!' he shouted, with a dancing eye and exulting voice. 'You know the great forest of Jonsterna. Often have I hunted in it. The forest near us is but, as it were, a huge root of that vast woodland. Nearly in its centre is an ancient and crumbling castle, which, like all old ruins, is of course haunted. No peasant dare approach it. At its very mention the face of the forest farmer will grow grave and serious. Let us fly to it. Let us become the scaring ghosts whom all avoid. We shall be free from man, we shall live only for ourselves, we——' but his proposition was drowned in our excited cheers, and rising together, we all pledged a sacred vow to stand or fall by each other in this great struggle for freedom and for nature.

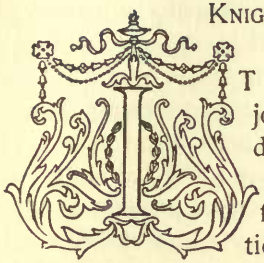
The night passed in canvassing plans to render this mighty scheme practicable. The first point was to baffle all inquiries after our place of refuge, and to throw all pursuers off the scent. We agreed that on a certain day we should take our way, in small and separate parties, by different routes to the old castle.

which we calculated was about sixty miles distant. Each man was to bear with him a rifle, a sword, and pistols, a travelling cloak, his knapsack, and as much ammunition as he could himself carry. Our usual hunting dress afforded an excellent uniform, and those who were without it were immediately to supply themselves. We were to quit the university without notice, and each of us on the same day was to write to his friends to notify his sudden departure on a pedestrian tour in Norway. Thus we calculated to gain time and effectually to baffle pursuit.

In spite of our lavish allowances, as it ever happens among young men, money was wanting. All that we possessed was instantly voted a common stock, but several men required rifles, and funds were deficient. I called for a crucible: I opened a cabinet: I drew out my famous gold medal. I gazed at it for a moment, and the classic cheers amid which it had been awarded seemed to rise upon my ear. I dashed away the recollection, and in a few minutes the splendid reward of my profound researches was melting over the fire, and affording the means of our full equipment.

CHAPTER III.

Knights of the Road.



T WAS the fourth morning of our journey. My companion was Ulric de Brahe. He was my only junior among the band, delicate of frame and affectionate in disposition, though hasty if excited, but my enthusiastic admirer. He was my great friend, and I was almost as intent to support him under the fatigue, as about the success of our enterprise. In our progress I had bought a donkey of a farmer, and loaded it with a couple of kegs of the brandy of the country. We had travelled the last two days entirely in the forest, passing many farm-houses and several villages, and as we believed were now near our point of rendezvous. I kicked on the donkey before me, and smiled on Ulric. I would have carried his rifle as well as my own, but his ardent temper and devoted love supported him; and when I expressed my anxiety about his toil, he only laughed and redoubled his pace.

We were pushing along on an old turf road cut through the thick woods, when suddenly, at the end of a side vista, I beheld the tower of a castle. 'Jonsterna!' I shouted, and I ran forward without the donkey. It was more distant than it appeared; but

at length we came to a large piece of clear land, and at the other side of it we beheld the long dreamt-of building. It was a vast structure, rather dilapidated than ruined. With delight I observed a human being moving upon the keep, whom I recognised by his uniform to be one of us, and as we approached nearer we distinguished two or three of our co-mates stretched upon the turf. They all jumped up and ran forward to welcome us. How heartily we shook hands, and congratulated each other on our reunion! More than half were already assembled. All had contrived, besides their own equipments, to bring something for the common stock. There was plenty of bread, and brandy, and game. Some were already out collecting wood. Before noon the rest arrived, except Pahlen and his comrade. And they came at last, and we received them with a cheer, for the provident vice-president, like an ancient warrior, was seated in a cart. 'Do not suppose that I am done up, my boys,' said the gay dog; 'I have brought gunpowder.'

When we had all assembled we rushed into the castle, and in the true spirit of boyhood examined everything. There was a large knights' hall, covered with tapestry and tattered banners. It was settled that this should be our chief apartment. We even found a huge oak-table and some other rude and ancient furniture. We appointed committees of examination. Some surveyed the cellars and dungeons, some the out-buildings. We were not afraid of ghosts, but marvellously fearful that we might have been anticipated by some human beings, as wild and less philosophical than ourselves. It was a perfect solitude. We cleared and cleaned out the hall, lighted an immense fire, arranged our stores, appointed their

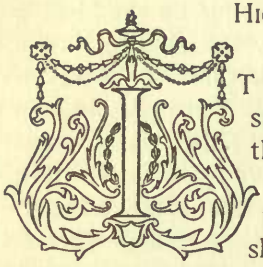
keeper, made beds with our cloaks, piled our arms, and cooked our dinner. An hour after sunset our first meal was prepared, and the Secret Union for the Amelioration of Society resumed their sittings almost in a savage state.

I shall never forget the scene and the proud exultation with which I beheld it: the vast and antique hall, the mystic tapestry moving and moaning with every gust of the windy night, the deep shades of the distant corners, the flickering light flung by the blazing hearth and the huge pine torches, the shining arms, the rude but plenteous banquet, the picturesque revellers, and I, their president, with my sword pressing on a frame ready to dare all things. 'This, this is existence!' I exclaimed. 'Oh! let us live by our own right arms, and let no law be stronger than our swords!'

I was even surprised by the savage yell of exultation with which my almost unconscious exclamation was received. But we were like young tigers, who, for a moment tamed, had now for the first time tasted blood, and rushed back to their own nature. A band of philosophers, we had insensibly placed ourselves in the most anti-philosophical position. Flying from the feudal system, we had unawares taken refuge in its favourite haunt. All our artificial theories of universal benevolence vanished. We determined to be what fortune had suddenly made us. We discarded the abstract truths which had in no age of the world ever been practised, and were of course therefore impracticable. We smiled at our ignorance of human nature and ourselves. The Secret Union for the Amelioration of Society suddenly turned into a corps of bandits, and their philosophical president was voted their captain.

CHAPTER IV.

Highway Robbery.



T WAS midnight. They threw themselves upon their rough couches, that they might wake fresh with the morning. Fatigue and brandy in a few minutes made them deep slumberers; but I could not sleep. I flung a log upon the fire, and paced the hall in deep communion with my own thoughts. The Rubicon was passed. Farewell, my father, farewell, my step-country; farewell, literary invention, maudlin substitute for a poetic life; farewell, effeminate arts of morbid civilisation! From this moment I ceased to be a boy. I was surrounded by human beings, bold and trusty, who looked only to my command, and I was to direct them to danger and guide them through peril. No child's game was this, no ideal play. We were at war, and at war with mankind.

I formed my plans; I organised the whole system. Action must be founded on knowledge. I would have no crude abortive efforts. Our colossal thoughts should not degenerate into a frolic. Before we commenced our career of violence, I was determined that I would have a thorough acquaintance with the

country. Every castle and every farm-house should be catalogued. I longed for a map, that I might muse over it like a general. I looked upon our good arms with complacency. I rejoiced that most of us were cunning of fence. I determined that they should daily exercise with the broadsword, and that each should become a dead shot with his rifle. In the perfection of our warlike accomplishments I sought a substitute for the weakness of our numbers.

The morning at length broke. I was not in the least fatigued. I longed to commence my arrangements. It grew very cold. I slept for an hour. I was the first awake. I determined in future to have a constant guard. I roused Pahlen. He looked fierce in his sleep. I rejoiced in his determined visage. I appointed him my lieutenant. I impressed upon him how much I depended upon his energy. We lighted a large fire, arranged the chamber, and prepared their meal before any woke. I was determined that their resolution should be supported by the comfort which they found around them; I felt that cold and hunger are great sources of cowardice.

They rose in high spirits: everything seemed delightful. The morn appeared only a continuation of the enjoyment of the evening. When they were emboldened by a good meal, I developed to them my plans. I ordered Ulric de Brahe to be first on guard, a duty from which no one was to be exempt but Pahlen and myself. The post was the tower which had given me the first earnest of their fealty in assembling. No one could now approach the castle without being perceived, and we took measures that the guard should be perfectly concealed. Parties were then ordered out in different directions, who were all

to bring their report by the evening banquet; Pahlen alone was to repair to a more distant town, and to be absent four days. He took his cart, and we contrived to dress him as like a peasant as our wardrobe would permit. His purpose was to obtain different costumes which were necessary for our enterprise. I remained with two of my men, and worked at the interior arrangements of our dwelling.

Thus passed a week, and each day the courage of my band became more inflamed; they panted for action. We were in want of meal: I determined to attack a farmer's grange on the ensuing eve, and I resolved to head the enterprise myself. I took with me Ulric and three others. We arrived an hour before sunset at the devoted settlement; it had been already well reconnoitred. Robberies in this country were unknown; we had to encounter no precautions. We passed the door of the granary, rifled it, stored our cart, and escaped without a dog barking. We returned two hours before midnight; and the excitement of this evening I shall never forget. All were bursting with mad enthusiasm; I alone looked grave, as if everything depended upon my mind. It was astonishing what an influence this assumption of seriousness, in the midst of their wild mirth, already exercised upon my companions. I was, indeed, their chief; they placed in me unbounded confidence, and almost viewed me as a being of another order.

I sent off Pahlen the next day in the disguise of a pedlar, to a neighbouring village. The robbery was the topic of general conversation; everybody was astounded, and no one was suspected. I determined, however, not to hazard in a hurry another enterprise in the neighbourhood. We wanted nothing except

wine. Our guns each day procured us meat, and the farmer's meal was a plentiful source of bread. Necessity develops much talent: already one of our party was pronounced an excellent cook; and the last fellow in the world we should ever have suspected put an old oven into perfect order, and turned out an ingenious mechanic.

It was necessary to make a diversion in a distant part of the forest. I sent out my lieutenant with a strong party; they succeeded in driving home from a rich farm four cows in milk. This was a great addition to our luxuries; and Pahlen, remaining behind, paid in disguise an observatory visit to another village in the vicinity, and brought us home the gratifying intelligence that it was settled that the robbers were a party from a town far away, on the other side of the forest.

These cases of petty plundering prepared my band for the deeper deeds which I always contemplated. Parties were now out for days together. We began to be familiar with every square mile of country. Through this vast forest land, but a great distance from the castle, ran a high-road, on which there was much traffic. One evening, as Ulric and myself were prowling in this neighbourhood, we perceived a band of horsemen approaching; they were cloth-merchants returning from a great fair, eight in number, but only one or two armed, and merely with pistols. A cloth-merchant's pistol, that had been probably loaded for years, and was borne, in all likelihood, by a man who would tremble at his own fire, did not appear a very formidable weapon. The idea occurred to both of us simultaneously. We put on our masks, and one of us ran out from each side of the road,

and seized the bridle of the foremost horseman. I never saw a man so astonished in my life; he was perhaps even more astonished than afraid; but we gave them no time. I can scarcely describe the scene. There was dismounting, and the opening of saddle-bags, and the clinking of coin. I remember wishing them good night in the civilest tone possible, and then we were alone.

I stared at Ulric, Ulric stared at me, and then we burst into a loud laugh and danced about the road. I quite lost my presence of mind, and rejoiced that no one but my favourite friend was present to witness my unheroic conduct. We had a couple of forest ponies, that we had driven home one day from a friendly farmer, tied up in an adjoining wood. We ran to them, jumped on, and scampered away without stopping for five or six hours; at least I think so, for it was an hour after sunset before the robbery was committed, and it was the last hour of the moon before we reached our haunt.

'The captain has come! the captain has come!' was a sound that always summoned my band. Fresh faggots were thrown on the fire; beakers of wine and brandy placed on the table. I called for Pahlen and my pipe, flung myself on my seat, and, dashing the purses upon the board, 'Here,' said I, 'my boys! here is our first gold!'

CHAPTER V.

Danger and Flight.

THIS affair of the cloth-merchants made us quite mad; four parties were stopped in as many days. For any of our companions to return without booty or, what was much more prized, without an adventure, was considered flat treason. Our whole band was now seldom assembled. The travellers to the fair were a never-failing source of profit. Each day we meditated bolder exploits; and, understanding that a wedding was about to take place in a neighbouring castle, I resolved to surprise the revellers in their glory, and capture the bride.

One evening as, seated in an obscure corner of the hall, I was maturing my plans for this great achievement, and most of my companions were assembled at their meal, Pahlen unexpectedly returned. He was evidently much fatigued; he panted for breath; he was covered with sweat and dirt; his dress was torn and soiled; he reached the table with staggering steps; and, seizing a mighty flask of Rhenish, emptied it at a draught.

'Where is the captain?' he anxiously inquired.

I advanced; he seized me by the arm, and led me out of the chamber.

'A strong party of police and military have entered the forest; they have taken up their quarters at a town not ten miles off; their orders to discover our band are peremptory; every spot is to be searched, and the castle will be the first. I have fought my way through the uncut woods. You must decide to-night. What will you do?'

'Their strength?'

'A company of infantry, a party of rangers, and a sufficiently stout body of police. Resistance is impossible.'

'It seems so.'

'And escape, unless we fly at once. To-morrow we shall be surrounded.'

'The devil!'

'I wish to heaven we were once more in your rooms, Fleming!'

'Why, it would be as well. But, for heaven's sake, be calm! If we waver, what will the rest do? Let us summon our energies. Is concealment impossible? The dungeons?'

'Every hole will most assuredly be searched.'

'An ambush might destroy them. We must fight, if they run us to bay.'

'Poh!'

'Blow up the castle, then?'

'And ourselves?'

'Well?'

'Heavens! what a madman you are! It was all you, Fleming, that got us into this infernal scrape. Why the devil should we become robbers, whom society has evidently intended only to be robbed?'

'You are poignant, Pahlen. Come, let us to our friends.' I took him by the arm, and we entered the hall together.

'Gentlemen,' I said, 'my lieutenant brings important intelligence. A strong party of military and police have entered the forest to discover and secure us; they are twenty to one, and therefore too strong for an open combat. The castle cannot stand an hour's siege, and an ambush, although it might prove successful, and gain us time, will eventually only render our escape more difficult, and our stay here impossible. I propose, therefore, that we should disperse for a few days, and, before our departure, take heed that no traces of recent residence are left in this building. If we succeed in baffling their researches, we can again assemble here; or, which I conceive will be more prudent and more practicable, meet once more only to arrange our plans for our departure to another and a more distant country. We have ample funds; we can purchase a ship. Mingling with the crew as amateurs, we shall soon gain sufficient science. A new career is before us. The Baltic leads to the Mediterranean. Think of its blue waters and beaming skies; its archipelagoes and picturesque inhabitants. We have been bandits in a northern forest; let us now become pirates on a southern sea!'

No sympathetic cheer followed this eloquent appeal; there was a deep, dull, dead, dismal silence. I watched them narrowly; all looked with fixed eyes upon the table. I stood with folded arms; the foot of Pahlen nervously patting against the ground was the only sound. At length, one by one, each dared to gaze upon another, and tried to read his fellow's

thoughts; they could, without difficulty, detect the lurking but terrible alarm.

'Well, gentlemen,' I said, 'time presses; I still trust I am your captain?'

'O Fleming, Fleming,' exclaimed the cook, with a broken voice and most piteous aspect, and dropping my title, which hitherto had been scrupulously observed; 'how can you go on so? It is quite dreadful!'

There was an assenting murmur.

'I am sure,' continued the artist, whom I always knew to be the greatest coward of the set; 'I am sure I never thought it would come to this. I thought it was only a frolic. I have got led on I am sure I do not know how. But you have such a way. What will our fathers think? Robbers! How horrible! And then suppose we are shot! O Lord! what will our mothers say! And after all we are only a parcel of boys, and did it out of fun. Oh! what shall I do?'

The grave looks with which this comic ebullition was received, proved that the sentiments, however undignified in their delivery, were congenial to the band. The orator was emboldened by not being laughed at for the first time in his life, and proceeded:

'I am sure I think we had better give ourselves up, and then our families might get us through: we can tell the truth; we can say we only did it for fun, and can give up the money, and as much more as they like. I do not think they would hang us. Do you? Oh!'

'The devil take the hindmost,' said the young Count Bornholm, rising, 'I am off. It will go hard if they arrest me, because I am out sporting with my

gun, and if they do I will give them my name, and then I should like to see them stop me.'

'That will be best,' all eagerly exclaimed and rose. 'Let us all disperse, each alone with his gun.'

'Let us put out the fire,' said the cook; 'they may see the light.'

'What, without windows?' said Bornholm.

'Oh! these police see everything. What shall I do with the kettles? We shall all get detected. To think it should come to this! Shot, perhaps hung! Oh!'

'Throw everything down the well,' said Pahlen; 'money and all.'

Now I knew it was over. I had waited to hear Pahlen's voice, and I now saw it was all up. I was not sorry. I felt the inextricable difficulties in which we were involved, and what annoyed me most was, that I had hitherto seen no mode of closing my part with dignity.

'Gentlemen,' I said, 'so long as you are within these walls I am still your captain. You desert me, but I will not disgrace you. Fly then; fly to your schools and homes, to your affectionate parents and your dutiful tutors. I should have known with whom I leagued myself. I at least am not a boy, and although now a leader without followers, I will still, for the honour of my race and the world in which we breathe, I will still believe that I may find trustier bosoms, and pursue a more eminent career.'

Ulric de Brahe rushed forward and placed himself by my side: 'Fleming,' he said, 'I will never desert you!'

I pressed his hand with the warmth it deserved, but the feeling of solitude had come over me. I

wished to be alone. 'No, Ulric,' I replied, 'we must part. I will tie no one to my broken fortunes. And, my friends all, let us not part in bitterness. Excuse me, if in a moment of irritation I said aught that was unkind to those I love, depreciating to those whose conduct I have ever had cause to admire. Some splendid hours we have passed together, some brief moments of gay revel, and glorious daring, and sublime peril. We must part. I will believe that our destiny, and not our will, separates us. My good sword,' I exclaimed, and I drew it from the scabbard, 'in future you shall belong to the bravest of the brave,' and kissing it, I presented it to Pahlen. 'And now one brimming cup to the past. Pledge me all, and in spite of every danger, with a merry face.'

Each man quaffed the goblet till it was dry, and performed the supernaculum, and then I walked to a distant part of the hall, whispering as I passed Pahlen, 'See that everything necessary is done.'

The castle well was the general receptacle for all our goods and plunder. In a few minutes the old hall presented almost the same appearance as on our arrival. The fire was extinguished. Everything disappeared. By the light of a solitary torch, each man took his rifle, and his knapsack, and his cloak, and then we were about to disperse. I shook hands with each. Ulric de Brahe lingered behind, and once more whispered his earnest desire to accompany me. But I forbade him, and he quitted me rather irritated.

I was alone. In a few minutes, when I believed that all had gone forth, I came out. Ere I departed, I stopped before the old castle, and gazed upon it, grey in the moonlight. The mighty pines rose tall and black into the dark blue air. All was silent.

The beauty and the stillness blended with my tumultuous emotions, and in a moment I dashed into poetry. Forgetting the imminent danger in which my presence on this spot, even my voice, might involve me, I poured forth my passionate farewell to the wild scene of my wilder life. I found a fierce solace in this expression of my heart. I discovered a substitute for the excitement of action in the excitment of thought. Deprived of my castle and my followers, I fled to my ideal world for refuge. There I found them, a forest far wilder and more extensive, a castle far more picturesque and awful, a band infinitely more courageous and more true. My imagination supported me under my whelming mortification. Crowds of characters, and incidents, and passionate scenes, clustered into my brain. Again I acted, again I gave the prompt decision, again I supplied the never-failing expedient, again we revelled, fought, and plundered.

It was midnight, when, wrapping himself in his cloak, and making a bed of fern, the late lord of Jonsterna betook himself to his solitary slumber beneath the wide canopy of heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

A Happy Encounter.

I ROSE with the sun, and the first thought that occurred to me was to write a tragedy. The castle in the forest, the Protean Pahlen, the tender-hearted Ulric, the craven cook, who was to be the traitor to betray the all-interesting and marvellous hero, myself, here was material. What soliloquies, what action, what variety of character! I threw away my cloak, it wearied me, and walked on, waving my arm, and spouting a scene. I longed for the moment that I could deliver to an imperishable scroll these vivid creations of my fancy. I determined to make my way to the nearest town and record these strong conceptions, ere the fire of my feelings died away. I was suddenly challenged by the advance guard of a party of soldiers. They had orders to stop all travellers, and bring them to their commanding officer. I accordingly repaired to their chief.

I had no fear as to the result. I should affect to be a travelling student, and, in case of any difficulty, I had determined to confide my name to the officer. But this was unnecessary. I went through my examination with such a confident air, that nothing was

suspected, and I was permitted to proceed. This was the groundwork for a new incident, and in the third act I instantly introduced a visit in disguise to the camp of the enemy.

I refreshed myself at a farm-house, where I found some soldiers billeted. I was amused with being the subject of their conversation, and felt my importance. As I thought, however, it was but prudent to extricate myself from the forest without any unnecessary loss of time, I took my way towards its skirts, and continued advancing in that direction for several days, until I found myself in a district with which I was unacquainted. I had now gained the open country. Emerging from the straggling woodland one afternoon about an hour before sunset, I found myself in a highly cultivated and beautiful land. A small but finely-formed lake spread before me covered with wild fowl. On its opposite side rose a gentle acclivity richly wooded and crowned by a magnificent castle. The declining sun shed a beautiful warm light over the proud building, and its parks and gardens, and the surrounding land, which was covered with orchards and small fields of tall golden grain.

The contrast of all this civilisation and beauty with the recent scene of my savage existence was very striking. I leant in thought upon my rifle, and it occurred to me that, in my dark work, although indeed its characteristic was the terrible, there too should be something sunny, and fresh, and fair. For if in nature and in life man finds these changes so delightful, so also should it be in the ideal and the poetic. And the thought of a heroine came into my mind. And while my heart was softened by the remembrance of woman, and the long-repressed waters

of my passionate affections came gushing through the stern rocks that had so long beat them away, a fanciful and sparkling equipage appeared advancing at a rapid pace to the castle. A light and brilliant carriage, drawn by four beautiful grey horses, and the chasseur in an hussar dress, and the caracoling outriders, announced a personage of distinction. They advanced; the road ran by my feet. As they approached I perceived that there was only a lady in the carriage. I could not distinguish much, but my heart was prophetic of her charms. The carriage was within five yards of me. Never had I beheld so beautiful and sumptuous a creature. A strange feeling came over me, the carriage and the riders suddenly stopped, and its mistress, starting from her seat, exclaimed, almost shouted 'Contarini! surely, Contarini!'

CHAPTER VII.

The Mysterious Captain.

I RUSHED forward; I seized her extended hand; the voice called back the sweetness of the past; my memory struggled through the mist of many years—'Christiana!' I had seen her once or twice since the golden age of our early loves, but not of late. I had heard, too, that she had married, and heard it with a pang. Her husband, Count Norberg, I now learnt, was the lord of the castle before us. I gave a hurried explanation of my presence, a walking tour, a sporting excursion, anything did, while I held her sweet hand, and gazed upon her sparkling face.

I gave my gun and knapsack to an attendant, and jumped into the carriage. So many questions uttered in so kind a voice; I never felt happier. Our drive lasted only a few minutes, yet it was long enough for Christiana to tell me a thousand times how rejoiced she was to meet me, and how determined that I should be her guest.

We dashed through the castle gates. Alighting, I led her through the hall, up the lofty staircase, and into a suite of saloons. No one was there. She ran

with me upstairs, would herself point out to me my room, and was wild with glee. 'I have not time to talk now, Contarini. We dine in an hour. I will dress as fast as I can, and then we shall meet in the drawing-room.'

I was alone, and throwing myself into a chair, uttered a deep sigh. It even surprised *me,* for I felt at this moment very happy. The servant entered with my limited wardrobe. I tried to make myself look as much like a man of the world and as little like a bandit as possible; but I was certainly more picturesque than splendid. When I had dressed I forgot to descend, and leant over the mantel-piece, gazing on the empty stove. The remembrance of my boyhood overpowered me. I thought of the garden in which we had first met, of her visit to me in the dark to solace my despair; I asked myself why in her presence everything seemed beautiful, and I felt happy?

Some one tapped at the door. 'Are you ready?' said the voice of voices. I opened the door, and taking her hand, we exchanged looks of joyful love, and descended together.

We entered the saloon. She led me up to a middle-aged but graceful personage; she introduced me to her husband as the oldest and dearest of her friends. There were several other gentlemen in the room who had come to enjoy the chase with their host, but no ladies. We dined at a round table, and I was seated by Christiana. The conversation ran almost entirely on the robbers, of whom I heard romantic and ridiculous accounts. I asked the Countess how she should like to be the wife of a bandit chief?

'I hardly know what I should do,' she answered playfully, 'were I to meet with some of those inter-

esting ruffians of whom we occasionally read; but I fear, in this age of reality, these sentimental heroes would be difficult to discover.'

'Yes; I have no doubt,' said a young nobleman opposite, 'that if we could detect this very captain, of whom we have daily heard such interesting details, we should find him to be nothing better than a decayed innkeeper, or a broken subaltern at the best.'

'You think so?' I replied. 'In this age we are as prone to disbelieve in the extraordinary as we were once eager to credit it. I differ from you about the subject of our present discussion, nor do I believe him to be by any means a common character.'

My remark attracted general observation. I spoke in a confident but slow and serious tone. I wished to impress on Christiana that I was no longer a child.

'But may I ask on what grounds you have formed your opinion?' said the Count.

'Principally upon my own observation,' I replied.

'Your own observation!' exclaimed mine host. 'What, have you seen him?'

'Yes.'

They would have thought me joking had I not looked so grave, but my serious air ill accorded with their smiles.

'I was with him in the forest,' I continued, 'and held considerable conversation with him. I even accompanied him to his haunt, and witnessed his assembled band.'

'Are you serious?' all exclaimed. The Countess was visibly interested.

'But were you not very frightened?' she inquired.

'Why should I be frightened?' I answered; 'a solitary student offered but poor prey. He would have passed me unnoticed had I not sought his acquaintance, and he was a sufficiently good judge of human nature speedily to discover that I was not likely to betray him.'

'And what sort of a man is he?' asked the young noble. 'Is he young?'

'Very.'

'Well, I think this is the most extraordinary incident that ever happened!' observed the Count.

'It is most interesting,' added the Countess.

'Whatever may be his rank or appearance, it is all up with him by this time,' remarked an old gentleman.

'I doubt it,' I replied, mildly, but firmly.

'Doubt it! I tell you what, if you were a little older, and knew this forest as well as I do, you would see that his escape is impossible. Never were such arrangements. There is not a square foot of ground that will not be scoured, and stations left on every cross road. I was with the commanding officer only yesterday. He cannot escape.'

'He cannot escape,' echoed a hitherto silent guest, who was a great sportsman. 'I will bet any sum he is taken before the week is over.'

'If it would not shock our fair hostess, Count Prater,' I rejoined, 'rest assured you should forfeit your stake.'

My host and his guests exchanged looks, as if to ask each other who was this very young man who talked with such coolness on such extraordinary subjects. But they were not cognisant of the secret cause of this exhibition. I wished to introduce my-

self as a man to the Countess. I wished her to associate my name with something of a more exalted nature than our nursery romance. I did not, indeed, desire that she should conceive that I was less sensible to her influence, but I was determined she should feel that her influence was exercised over no ordinary being. I felt that my bold move had already in part succeeded. I more than once caught her eye, and read the blended feeling of astonishment and interest with which she listened to me.

'Well, perhaps he may not be taken in a week,' said the betting Count Prater; 'it would be annoying to lose my wager by an hour.'

'Say a fortnight then,' said the young nobleman.

'A fortnight, a year, an age, what you please,' I observed.

'You will bet, then, that he will not be taken?' said Count Prater, eagerly.

'I will bet that the expedition retires in despair,' I replied.

'Well, what shall it be?' asked the Count, feeling that he had an excellent bet, and yet fearful, from my youthful appearance, that our host might deem it but delicate to insure its being a light one.

'What you please,' I replied; 'I seldom bet, but when I do, I care not how high the stake may be.'

'Five or fifty, or, if you please, five hundred dollars,' suggested the Count.

'Five thousand, if you like.'

'We are very moderate here, baron,' said our host, with a smile. 'You university heroes frighten us.'

'Well, then,' I exclaimed, pointing to the Countess's left arm, 'you see this ruby bracelet? the loser shall supply its fellow.'

'Bravo!' said the young nobleman; and Prater was forced to consent.

Many questions were now asked about the robbers, as to the nature and situation of their haunt; their numbers; their conduct. To all these queries I replied with as much detail as was safe, but with the air of one who was resolved not in any way to compromise the wild outlaw, who had established his claim to be considered a man of honour.

In the evening the Count and his friends sat down to cards, and I walked up and down the saloon in conversation with Christiana. I found her manner to me greatly changed since the morning. She was evidently more constrained; evidently she felt that in her previous burst of cordiality she had forgotten that time might have changed me more than it had her. I spoke to her little of home. I did not indulge in the details of domestic tattle; I surprised her by the wild and gloomy tone in which I mentioned myself and my fortunes. I mingled with my reckless prospect of the future the bitterest sarcasms on my present lot; and, when I had almost alarmed her by my malignant misanthropy, I darted into a train of gay nonsense or tender reminiscences, and piqued her by the easy and rapid mode in which my temper seemed to shift from morbid sensibility to callous mockery.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Serious Indiscretion.

I RETIRED to my room, and wrote a letter to my servant at the university, directing him to repair to Norberg Castle with my horses and wardrobe. The fire blazed brightly; the pen was fresh and brisk; the idea rushed into my head in a moment, and I commenced my tragedy. I had already composed the first scene in my head. The plot was simple, and had been finally arranged while walking up and down the saloon with the Countess. A bandit chief falls in love with the wife of a rich noble, the governor of the province which is the scene of his ravages. I sat up nearly all night in fervid composition. I wrote with greater facility than before, because my experience of life was so much increased that I had no difficulty in making my characters think and act. There was, indeed, little art in my creation, but there was much vitality.

I rose very late, and found that the chase had long ago called forth my fellow guests. I could always find amusement in musing over my next scene, and I sauntered forth, almost unconscious of what I

did. I found Christiana in a fanciful flower garden. She was bending down tending a favourite plant. My heart beat, my spirit seemed lighter; she heard my step, she raised her smiling face, and gave me a flower.

'Ah! does not this remind you,' I said, 'of a spot of early days? I should grieve if you had forgotten the scene of our first acquaintance.'

'The dear garden house,' exclaimed Christiana, with an arch smile. 'Never shall I forget it. O Contarini, what a little boy you were then!'

We wandered about together till the noon had long passed, talking of old times, and then we entered the castle for rest. She was as gay as a young creature in spring, but I was grave, though not gloomy. I listened to her musical voice. I watched the thousand ebullitions of her beaming grace. I could not talk. I could only assent to her cheerful observations, and repose in peaceful silence, full of tranquil joy. The morning died away; the hunters returned; we reassembled to talk over their day's exploits, and speculate on the result of my bet with Count Prater.

No tidings were heard of the robbers; nearly every observation of yesterday was repeated. It was a fine specimen of rural conversation. They ate keenly, they drank freely, and I rejoiced when they were fairly seated again at their card-table, and I was once more with Christiana.

I was delighted when she quitted the harp and seated herself at the piano. I care little for a melodious voice, as it gives me no ideas, but instrumental music is a true source of inspiration; and as Christiana executed the magnificent overture of a great

German master, I moulded my feelings of the morning into a scene, and, when I again found myself in my room, I recorded it with facility, or only with a degree of difficulty with which it was exhilarating to contend.

At the end of three days my servant arrived, and gave me the first intimation that myself and my recent companions were expelled, for which I cared as little as for their gold medal.

Three weeks flew away, distinguished by no particular incident, excepting the loss of his gage by Count Prater, and my manifold care that he should redeem it. The robbers could not in any manner be traced, although Jonsterna afforded some indications. The wonder increased and was universal, and my exploits afforded a subject for a pamphlet, the cheapness of whose price, the publisher earnestly impressed upon us, could only be justified by its extensive circulation.

Three weeks had flown away, three sweet weeks, and flown away in the almost constant presence of Christiana, or in scarcely less delightful composition. My tragedy was finished. I resolved to return home; I longed to bring my reputation to the test; yet I lingered about Christiana.

I lingered about her, as the young bird about the first sunny fruit his inexperienced love dare not touch. I was ever with her, and each day grew more silent. I joined her, exhausted by composition. In her presence I sought refreshing solace, renewed inspiration. I spoke little, for one feeling alone occupied my being, and even of that I was not cognisant, for its nature to me was indefinite and indistinct, although its

power was constant and irresistible. But I avenged myself for this strange silence when I was once more alone, and my fervid page teemed with the imaginary passion, of whose reality my unpractised nature was not even yet convinced.

One evening, as we were walking together in the saloon, and she was expressing her wish that I would remain, and her wonder as to the necessity of my returning, which I described as so imperative, suddenly, and in the most unpremeditated manner, I made her the confidant of my literary secret. I was charmed with the temper in which she received it, and the deep and serious interest which she expressed in my success. 'Do you know,' she added, 'Contarini, you will think it very odd, but I have always believed that you were intended for a poet.'

My sparkling eye, sparkling with hope and affection, thanked her for her sympathy, and it was agreed that, on the morrow, I should read to her my production.

I was very nervous when I commenced. This was the first time that my composition had been submitted to a human being, and now this submission was to take place in the presence of the author, and through the medium of his voice. As I proceeded, I grew rather more assured. The interest which Christiana really found, or affected to find, encouraged me. If I hesitated, she said, 'Beautiful!' whenever I paused, she exclaimed, 'Interesting!' My voice grew firmer; the interest which I myself took banished my false shame; I grew excited; my modulated voice impressed my sentiments, and my action sometimes explained them. The robber scene was considered wonderful and full of life and nature. Christiana marvelled how

I could have invented such extraordinary things and characters. At length I came to my heroine. Her beauty was described in an elaborate and far too poetic passage. It was a perfect fac-simile of the Countess. It was ridiculous. She herself felt it, and, looking up, smiled with a faint blush.

I had now advanced into the very heart of the play, and the scenes of sentiment had commenced. I had long since lost my irresolution. The encouragement of Christiana, and the delight which I really felt in my writing, made me more than bold. I really acted before her. She was susceptible. All know how easy it is for a very indifferent drama, if well performed, to soften even the callous. Her eyes were suffused with tears; my emotion was also visible. I felt like a man brought out of a dungeon, and groping his way in the light. How could I have been so blind when all was so evident? It was not until I had recited to Christiana my fictitious passion, that I had become conscious of my real feelings. I had been ignorant all this time that I had been long fatally in love with her. I threw away my manuscript, and, seizing her hand, 'O, Christiana!' I exclaimed, 'what mockery is it thus to veil truth? Before you is the leader of the band of whom you have heard so much. He adores you.'

She started: I cannot describe the beautiful consternation of her countenance.

'Contarini,' she exclaimed, 'are you mad! what can you mean?'

'Mean!' I poured forth; 'is it doubtful? Yes! I repeat I am the leader of that band, whose exploits have so recently alarmed you. Cannot you now comprehend the story of my visiting their haunt?

Was it probable, was it possible, that I should have been permitted to gain their secret and to retire? The robbers were youths like myself, weary of the dull monotony of our false and wretched life. We have yielded to overwhelming force, but we have baffled all pursuit. For myself, I quit for ever a country I abhor. Ere a year has passed I shall roam a pirate on the far waves of the Ægean. One tie only binds me to this rigid clime. In my life I have loved only one being. I look upon her. Yes! yes! it is you, Christiana. On the very brink of my exile Destiny has brought us once more together. Oh! let us never part! Be mine, be mine! Share with me my glory, my liberty, and my love!'

I poured forth this rhapsody with impassioned haste. The Countess stared with blank astonishment. She appeared even alarmed. Suddenly she sprang up and ran out of the room.

CHAPTER IX.

An Upward Step.

I WAS enraged, and I was confused. I do not know whether I felt more shame or more irritation. My vanity impelled me to remain some time with the hope that she would return. She did not, and seizing my tragedy, I rushed into the park. I met my servant exercising a horse. I sent him back to the castle alone, jumped on my steed, and in a few minutes was galloping along the high road to the metropolis.

It was about one hundred miles distant. When I reached home, I found that my father and the Baroness were in the country. I was not sorry to be alone, as I really had returned without any object, and had not, in any degree, prepared myself to meet my father. After some consideration, I enclosed my tragedy to an eminent publisher, and I sent it him from a quarter whence he could gain no clue as to its source. I pressed him for a reply without unnecessary loss of time, and he, unlike these gentry, who really think themselves far more important personages than those by whose wits they live, was punctual. In the course of a week he returned me my manu-

script, with his compliments, and an extract from the letter of his principal critic, in which my effusion was described as a laboured exaggeration of the most unnatural features of the German school. On the day I received it my father also arrived.

He was alone, and had merely come up to town to transact business. He was surprised to see me, but said nothing of my expulsion, although I felt confident that he must be aware of it. We dined together alone. He talked to me at dinner of indifferent subjects: of alterations at his castle, and the state of Europe. As I wished to conciliate him, I affected to take great interest in this latter topic, and I thought he seemed pleased with the earnest readiness with which I interfered in the discussion. After dinner he remarked very quietly, filling his glass, 'Had you communicated with me, Contarini, I could perhaps have saved you the disgrace of expulsion.'

I was quite taken by surprise, and looked very confused. At last I said, 'I fear, sir, I have occasioned you too often great mortification; but I sometimes cannot refrain from believing that I may yet make a return to you for all your goodness.'

'Everything depends upon yourself, Contarini. You have elected to be your own master. You must take the consequences of your courage or your rashness. What are your plans? I do not know whether you mean to honour me with your confidence as a friend. I do not even aspire to the authority of a father.'

'Oh! pray, sir, do not say so. I place myself entirely at your disposal. I desire nothing more ardently than to act under your command. I assure you that you will find me a very different person from what

you imagine. I am impressed with a most earnest and determined resolution to become a practical man. You must not judge of me by my boyish career. The very feelings that made me revolt at the discipline of schools will insure my subordination in the world. I took no interest in their petty pursuits, and their minute legislation interfered with my more extended views.'

'What views?' asked my father, with a smile.

I was somewhat puzzled, but I answered, 'I wish, sir, to influence men.'

'But before you influence others you must learn to influence yourself. Now those who would judge, perhaps imperfectly, of your temperament, Contarini, would suppose that its characteristic was a nature so headstrong and imprudent that it could not fail of involving its possessor in many dangerous and sometimes even in very ridiculous positions.'

I was silent, with my eyes fixed on the ground.

'I think you have sufficient talents for all that I could reasonably desire, Contarini,' continued my father; 'I think you have talents indeed for anything; anything, I mean, that a rational being can desire to attain; but you sadly lack judgment. I think that you are the most imprudent person with whom I ever was acquainted. You have a great enemy, Contarini, a great enemy in yourself. You have a great enemy in your imagination. I think if you could control your imagination you might be a great man.

'It is a fatal gift, Contarini; for when possessed in its highest quality and strength what has it ever done for its votaries? What were all those great poets of whom we now talk so much, what were they in their lifetime? The most miserable of their species.

Depressed, doubtful, obscure, or involved in petty quarrels and petty persecutions; often unappreciated, utterly uninfluential, beggars, flatterers of men unworthy even of their recognition; what a train of disgustful incidents, what a record of degrading circumstances, is the life of a great poet! A man of great energies aspires that they should be felt in his lifetime, that his existence should be rendered more intensely vital by the constant consciousness of his multiplied and multiplying power. Is posthumous fame a substitute for all this? Viewed in every light, and under every feeling, it is alike a mockery. Nay, even try the greatest by this test, and what is the result? Would you rather have been Homer or Julius Cæsar, Shakespeare or Napoleon? No one doubts. Moralists may cloud truth with every possible adumbration of cant, but the nature of our being gives the lie to all their assertions. We are active beings, and our sympathy, above all other sympathies, is with great action.

'Remember, Contarini, that all this time I am taking for granted that you may be a Homer. Let us now recollect that it is perhaps the most improbable incident that can occur. The high poetic talent (as if to prove that a poet is only, at the best, a wild although beautiful error of nature), the high poetic talent is the rarest in creation. What you have felt is what I have felt myself, is what all men have felt: it is the consequence of our native and inviolate susceptibility. As you advance in life and become more callous, more acquainted with man and with yourself, you will find it even daily decrease. Mix in society and I will answer that you lose your poetic feeling; for in you, as in the great majority, it is not a crea-

tive faculty originating in a peculiar organisation, but simply the consequence of a nervous susceptibility that is common to all.'

I suspected very much that my father had stumbled on the unhappy romance of the Wild Hunter of Rodenstein, which I had left lying about my drawers, but I said nothing. He proceeded:

'The time has now arrived which may be considered a crisis in your life. You have, although very young, resolved that society should consider you a man. No preparatory situation can now veil your indiscretions. A youth at the university may commit outrages with impunity, which will affix a lasting prejudice on a person of the same age who has quitted the university. I must ask you again, what are your plans?'

'I have none, sir, except your wishes. I feel acutely the truth of all you have observed. I assure you I am as completely and radically cured of any predisposition that, I confess, I once conceived I possessed for literary invention, as even you could desire. I will own to you that my ambition is great. I do not think that I should find life tolerable, unless I were in an eminent position, and conscious that I deserved it. Fame, although not posthumous fame, is, I feel, necessary to my felicity. In a word, I wish to devote myself to affairs! I attend only your commands.'

'If it meet your wishes, I will appoint you my private secretary. The post, particularly when confirmed by the confidence which must subsist between individuals connected as we are, is the best school for public affairs. It will prepare you for any office.'

'I can conceive nothing more delightful. You could not have fixed upon an appointment more congenial to my feelings. To be your constant companion, in the slightest degree to alleviate the burden of your labours, to be considered worthy of your confidence; this is all that I could desire. I only fear that my ignorance of routine may at first inconvenience you, but trust me, dear father, that, if devotion and the constant exertion of any talents I may possess can aid you, they will not be wanting. Indeed, indeed, sir, you never shall repent your goodness.'

This same evening I consigned my tragedy to the flames.

CHAPTER X.

A Budding Diplomat.

I DEVOTED myself to my new pursuits with as much fervour as I had done to the study of Greek. The former secretary initiated me in the mysteries of routine business. My father, although he made no remark, was evidently pleased at the facility and quickness with which I attained this formal but necessary information. Vattel and Martens were my private studies. I was greatly interested with my novel labours. Foreign policy opened a dazzling vista of splendid incident. It was enchanting to be acquainted with the secrets of European cabinets, and to control or influence their fortunes. A year passed with more satisfaction than any period of my former life. I had become of essential service to my father. My talent for composition found full exercise, and afforded him great aid in drawing up state papers and manifestoes, despatches and decrees. We were always together. I shared his entire confidence. He instructed me in the characters of the public men who surrounded us, and of those who were more distant. I was astonished at the scene of intrigue that opened on me. I

found that in some even of his colleagues I was only to perceive secret enemies, and in others but necessary tools and tolerated incumbrances. I delighted in the danger, the management, the negotiation, the suspense, the difficult gratification of his high ambition.

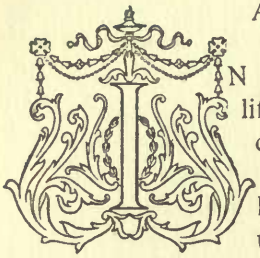
Intent as he was to make me a great statesman, he was scarcely less anxious that I should become a finished man of the world. He constantly impressed upon me that society was a politician's chief tool, and the paramount necessity of cultivating its good graces. He afforded me an ample allowance. He encouraged me in a lavish expenditure. Above all, he was ever ready to dilate upon the character of women; and, while he astonished me by the tone of depreciation in which he habitually spoke of them, he would even magnify their influence, and the necessity of securing it.

I modelled my character upon that of my father. I imbibed his deep worldliness. With my usual impetuosity I even exaggerated it. I recognised self-interest as the spring of all action. I received it as a truth, that no man was to be trusted, and no woman to be loved. I gloried in secretly believing myself the most callous of men, and that nothing could tempt me to compromise my absorbing selfism. I laid it down as a principle, that all considerations must yield to the gratification of my ambition. The ardour and assiduity with which I fulfilled my duties and prosecuted my studies had rendered me, at the end of two years, a very skilful politician. My chief fault, as a man of affairs, was, that I was too fond of patronising charlatans, and too ready to give every adventurer credit for talents. The moment a man started a new idea my active fancy conjured up all

the great results, and conceived that his was equally prophetic. But here my father's severe judgment and sharp experience always interfered for my benefit, and my cure was assisted by hearing a few of my black swans cackle instead of chant. As a member of society I was entirely exempt from the unskilful affectation of my boyhood. I was assured, arrogant, and bitter, but easy, and not ungraceful. The men trembled at my sarcasms, and the women repeated with wonderment my fantastic raillery. My position in life, and the exaggerated halo with which, in my case as in all others, the talents of eminent youth were injudiciously invested, made me courted by all, especially by the daughters of Eve. I was sometimes nearly the victim of hackneyed experience; sometimes I trifled with affections, which my parental instructions taught me never to respect. On the whole, I considered myself as one of the important personages of the country, possessing great talents, profound knowledge of men and affairs, and a perfect acquaintance with society. When I look back upon myself at this period, I have difficulty in conceiving a more unamiable character.

CHAPTER XI.

Added Glories.



N THE third year of my political life the prime minister suddenly died. Here was a catastrophe! Who was to be his successor? Here was a fruitful theme for speculation and intrigue! Public opinion pointed to my father, who indeed, if qualification for the post were only considered, had no competitor; but Baron Fleming was looked upon by his brother nobles with a jealous eye, and, although not unwilling to profit by his labours, they were chary of allowing them too uncontrolled a scope. He was talked of as a new man: he was treated as scarcely national. The state was not to be placed at the disposal of an adventurer. He was not one of themselves. It was a fatal precedent, that the veins of the prime minister should be filled with any other blood but that of their ancient order. Even many of his colleagues did not affect to conceal their hostility to his appointment, and the Count de Moltke, who was supposed to possess every quality that should adorn the character of a first minister, was openly announced as the certain successor to the vacant office.

The Count de Moltke was a frivolous old courtier, who had gained his little experience in long service in the household, and even were he appointed, could only anticipate the practicability of carrying on affairs by implicit confidence in his rival. The Count de Moltke was a tool.

Skilful as my father was in controlling and veiling his emotion, the occasion was too powerful even for his firmness. For the first time in his life he sought a confidant, and firm in the affection of a son, he confessed to me, with an agitation which was alone sufficient to express his meaning, how entirely he had staked his felicity on this cast. He could not refrain from bitterly dilating on the state of society, in which secret influence and the prejudices of a bigoted class should for a moment permit one who had devoted all the resources of a high intellect to the welfare of his country, to be placed in momentary competition, still more in permanent inferiority, with such an ineffable nonentity as the Count de Moltke.

Every feeling in my nature prompted me to energy. I counselled my father to the most active exertions; but although subtle, he was too cautious, and where he was himself concerned, even timid. I had no compunction and no fear. I would scruple at no means which could ensure our end. The feeling of society was in general in our favour. Even among the highest class, the women were usually on the side of my father. Baroness Engel, who was the evening star that beamed unrivalled in all our assemblies, and who fancied herself a little Duchess de Longueville, delighted in a political intrigue. I affected to make her our confidante. We resolved together that the only mode was to render our rival

ridiculous. I wrote an anonymous pamphlet in favour of the appointment of the Count de Moltke. It took in everybody, until in the last page they read my panegyric of his cream cheeses. It was in vain that the Count de Moltke and all his friends protested that his excellency had never made a cream cheese in the whole course of his life. The story was too probable not be true. He was just the old fool who would make a cream cheese. I secured the channel of our principal journals. Each morning teemed with a diatribe against back-stairs influence, the prejudices of a nobility who were behind their age, and indignant histories of the maladministration of court favourites. The evening, by way of change, brought only an epigram, sometimes a song. The fashion took: all the youth were on our side. One day, in imitation of the Tre Giuli, we published a whole volume of epigrams, all on cream cheeses. The Baroness was moreover an inimitable caricaturist. The shops were filled with infinite scenes, in which a ludicrous old fribble, such as we might fancy a French marquis before the Revolution, was ever committing something irresistibly ridiculous. In addition to all this, I hired ballad-singers, who were always chanting in the public walks, and even under the windows of the palace, the achievements of the unrivalled manufacturer of cream cheeses.

In the meantime my father was not idle. He had discovered that the Count de Bragnaes, one of the most influential nobles in the country, and the great supporter of De Moltke, was ambitious of becoming secretary for foreign affairs, and that De Moltke had hesitated in pledging himself to this arrangement, as he could not perceive how affairs could be carried on

if my father were entirely dismissed. My father opened a secret negotiation with De Bragnaes, and shook before his eyes the glittering seals he coveted. De Bragnaes was a dolt, but my father required only tools, and felt himself capable of fulfilling the duties of the whole ministry. This great secret was not concealed from me. I opposed the arrangement, not only because De Bragnaes was absolutely inefficient, but because I wished to introduce Baron Engel into the cabinet.

The post of chief minister had now been three weeks vacant, and the delay was accounted for by the illness of the sovereign, who was nevertheless in perfect health. All this excitement took place at the very season we were all assembled in the capital for the purposes of society. My father was everywhere, and each night visible. I contrasted the smiling indifference of his public appearance with the agonies of ambition which it was my doom alone to witness.

I was alone with my father in his cabinet, when a royal messenger summoned him to the presence. The king was at a palace about ten miles from the city. It did not in any way follow from the invitation that my father was successful: all that we felt assured of was that the crisis had arrived. We exchanged looks but not words. Intense as was the suspense, business prevented me from attending my father, and waiting in the royal antechamber to hear the great result. He departed.

I had to receive an important deputation, the discussion of whose wishes employed the whole morning. It was with extreme difficulty that I could command my attention. Never in my life had I felt so nervous. Each moment a messenger entered, I

believed that he was the important one. No carriage rolled into the court-yard that did not to my fancy bear my father. At last the deputation retired, and then came private interviews and urgent correspondence.

It was twilight. The servant had lit one burner of the lamp when the door opened, and my father stood before me. I could scarcely refrain from crying out. I pushed out the astonished waiting-man, and locked the door.

My father looked grave, serious; I thought a little depressed. 'All is over,' thought I; and in an instant I began speculating on the future, and had created much, when my father's voice called me back to the present scene.

'His Majesty, Contarini,' said my father, in a dry, formal manner, as if he were speaking to one who had never witnessed his weakness, 'his Majesty has been graciously pleased to appoint me to the supreme office of president of his council; and as a further mark of his entire confidence and full approbation of my past services, he has thought fit to advance me to the dignity of Count.'

Was this frigid form that stood unmoved before me the being whom, but four-and-twenty hours ago, I had watched trembling with his high passions? Was this curt, unimpassioned tone the voice in which he should have notified the crowning glory of his fortunes to one who had so struggled in their behalf? I could scarcely speak. I hardly congratulated him.

'And your late post, sir?' I at length inquired.

'The seals of this office will be held by the Baron de Bragnaes.'

I shrugged my shoulders in silence.

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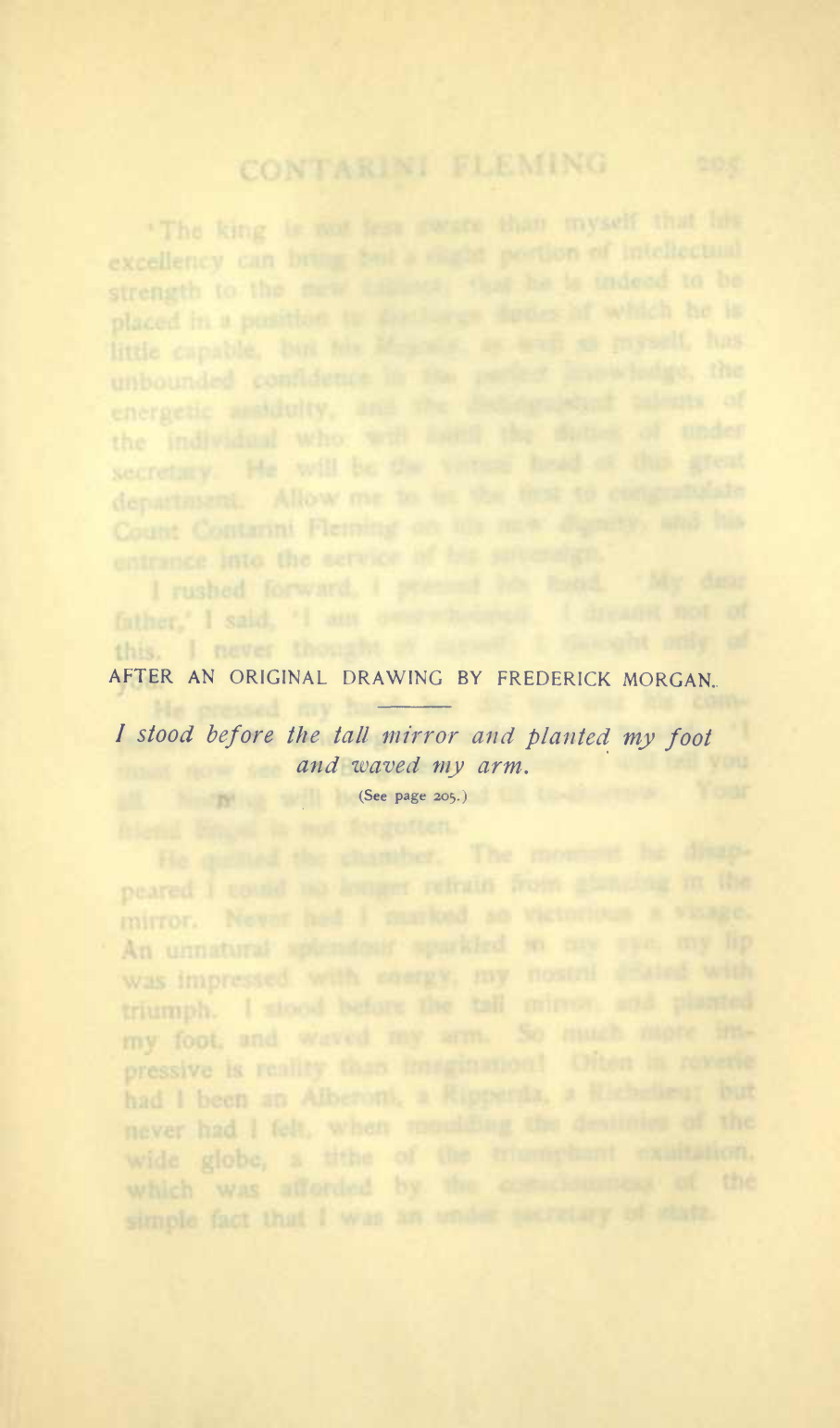
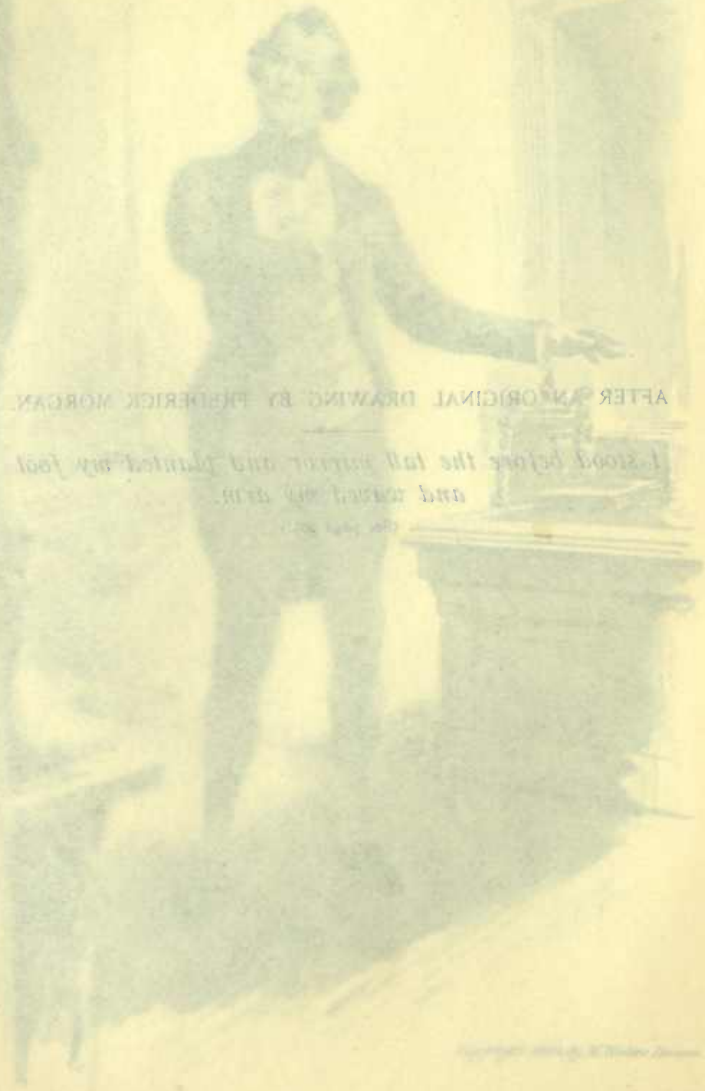


AFTER AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY FREDERICK MORGAN.

I stood before the tall mirror and planted my foot and waved my arm.

(See page 205.)



'The king is not less aware than myself that his excellency can bring but a slight portion of intellectual strength to the new cabinet; that he is indeed to be placed in a position to discharge duties of which he is little capable, but his Majesty, as well as myself, has unbounded confidence in the perfect knowledge, the energetic assiduity, and the distinguished talents of the individual who will fulfill the duties of under secretary. He will be the virtual head of this great department. Allow me to be the first to congratulate Count Contarini Fleming on his new dignity, and his entrance into the service of his sovereign.'

I rushed forward, I pressed his hand. 'My dear father,' I said, 'I am overwhelmed. I dreamt not of this. I never thought of myself; I thought only of you.'

He pressed my hand, but did not lose his composure. 'We dine together to-day alone,' he said. 'I must now see De Bragnaes. At dinner I will tell you all. Nothing will be announced till to-morrow. Your friend Engel is not forgotten.'

He quitted the chamber. The moment he disappeared I could no longer refrain from glancing in the mirror. Never had I marked so victorious a visage. An unnatural splendour sparkled in my eye, my lip was impressed with energy, my nostril dilated with triumph. I stood before the tall mirror, and planted my foot, and waved my arm. So much more impressive is reality than imagination! Often in reverie had I been an Alberoni, a Ripperda, a Richelieu; but never had I felt, when moulding the destinies of the wide globe, a tithe of the triumphant exultation, which was afforded by the consciousness of the simple fact that I was an under secretary of state.

CHAPTER XII.

A Second Courtship of My Muse.

I HAD achieved by this time what is called a great reputation. I do not know that there was any one more talked of and more considered in the country than myself. I was my father's only confidant, and secretly his only counsellor. I managed De Bragnaes admirably, and always suggested to him the opinion, which I at the same time requested. He was a mere cipher. As for the Count de Moltke, he was very rich, with an only daughter, and my father had already hinted at what I had even turned in my own mind, a union with the wealthy, although not very pleasing, offspring of the maker of cream cheeses.

At this moment, in the zenith of my popularity and power, the Norbergs returned to the capital. I had never seen them since the mad morning which, with all my boasted callousness, I ever blushed to remember; for the Count had, immediately after my departure, been appointed to an important although distant government. Nor had I ever heard of them. I never wished to. I drove their memory from my mind, but Christiana who had many correspondents, and among them the Baroness, had of course heard much of me.

Our family was the first they called upon, and in spite of the mortifying awkwardness of the meeting, it was impossible to avoid it, and therefore I determined to pay my respects to them immediately. I was careful to call when I knew I could not be admitted, and the first interview finally took place at our own house. Christiana received me with great kindness, although with increased reserve, which might be accounted for by the time that had elapsed since we last met, and the alteration that had since taken place both in my age and station. In all probability she looked upon my present career as a sufficient guarantee that my head was cleared of the wild fancies of my impetuous boyhood, and rejoicing in this accomplishment, and anticipating our future and agreeable acquaintance, she might fairly congratulate herself on the excellent judgment which had prompted her to pass over in silence my unpardonable indiscretion.

Her manner put me so completely at my ease that, a moment after my salute, I wondered I could have been so foolish as to have brooded over it. The Countess was unaltered, except that she looked perhaps more beautiful. She was a rare creation that Time loved to spare. That sweet, and blooming, and radiant face, and that tall, and shapely, and beaming form, not a single bad passion had ever marred their light and grace; all the freshness of an innocent heart had embalmed their perennial loveliness.

The party seemed dull. I, who was usually a great talker, could not speak. I dared not attempt to be alone with Christiana. I watched her only at a distance, and indicated my absorbing mood to others only by my curt and discouraging answers. When

all was over I retired to my own rooms exceedingly gloomy and dispirited.

I was in these days but a wild beast, who thought himself a civilised and human being. I was profoundly ignorant of all that is true and excellent. An unnatural system, like some grand violence of nature, had transformed the teeming and beneficent ocean of my mind into a sandy and arid desert. I had not then discovered even a faint adumbration of the philosophy of our existence. Blessed by nature with a heart that is the very shrine of sensibility, my infamous education had succeeded in rendering me the most selfish of my species.

But nature, as the philosophic Winter impressed upon me, is stronger than education; and the presence of this woman, this sudden appearance, amid my corrupt and heartless and artificial life, of so much innocence, and so much love, and so much simplicity, they fell upon my callous heart like the first rains upon a Syrian soil, and the refreshed earth responded to the kindly influence, by an instant recurrence to its nature.

I recoiled with disgust from the thought of my present life; I flew back with rapture to my old aspirations. And the beautiful, for which I had so often and so early sighed, and the love that I felt indispensable to my panting frame, and the deep sympathy for all creation that seemed my being, and all the dazzling and extending glory that had hovered like a halo round my youthful visions, they returned, they returned in their might and their splendour, and when I remembered what I was, I buried my face in my hands and wept.

I retired to my bed, but I could not sleep. I saw no hope, yet I was not miserable. Christiana could

never be mine. I did not wish her to be. I could not contemplate such an incident. I had prided myself on my profligacy, but this night avenged my innate purity. I threw off my factitious passions. It was the innocence of Christiana that exercised over me a spell so potent. Her unsophisticated heart awoke in me a passion for the natural and the pure. She was not made to be the heroine of a hackneyed adventure. To me she was not an individual, but a personification of nature. I gazed upon her only as I would upon a beautiful landscape, with an admiring sympathy which ennobles my feelings, invigorates my intellect, and calls forth the latent poetry of my being.

The thought darted into my mind in a moment. I cannot tell how it came. It seemed inspiration, but I responded to it with an eager and even fierce sympathy. Said I that the thought darted into my mind? Let me recall the weak phrase, let me rather say, that a form rose before me in the depth of the dull night, and that form was myself. That form was myself, yet also another. I beheld a youth, who, like me, had stifled the breathing forms of his creation, who, like me, in the cold wilderness of the world, looked back with a mournful glance at the bright gates of the sweet garden of fancy he had forfeited. I felt the deep and agonising struggle of his genius and his fate, and my prophetic mind bursting through all the thousand fetters that had been forged so cunningly to bind it in its cell, the inspiration of my nature, that beneficent demon who will not desert those who struggle to be wise and good, tore back the curtain of the future; and I beheld, seated upon a glorious throne on a proud Acropolis, one to whom a surrounding and enthusiastic people offered a laurel

crown. I laboured to catch the fleeting features and the changing countenance of him who sat upon the throne. Was it the strange youth or was it, indeed, myself?

I jumped out of bed. I endeavoured to be calm. I asked myself soberly whether I had indeed seen a vision, or whether it were but the invisible phantasm of an ecstatic reverie? I looked round me; there was nothing. The moonbeam was stationary on the wall. I opened the window and looked out upon the vast, and cold, and silent street. The bitterness of the night cooled me. The pulsations of my throbbing head subsided. I regained my bed, and instantly sank into a sweet sleep.

The aunt of the Countess Fleming had died, and left to my step-dame the old garden house, which is not perhaps forgotten. As I had always continued on the best possible terms with the Countess, and, indeed, was in all points quite her standard of perfection, she had, with great courtesy, permitted me to make her recently-acquired mansion my habitation, when important business occasionally made me desire for its transaction a spot less subject to constant interruption that my office and my home.

To the garden house I repaired the next morning at an early hour. I was so eager, that I ordered, as I dismounted, my rapid breakfast, and in a few minutes, this being despatched, I locked myself up in my room, giving orders not to be disturbed, unless for a message from my father.

I took up a pen. I held it in the light. I thought to myself what will be its doom, but I said nothing. I began writing some hours before noon, nor did I ever cease. My thoughts, my passion, the rush of

my invention, were too quick for my pen. Page followed page; as a sheet was finished I threw it on the floor; I was amazed at the rapid and prolific production, yet I could not stop to wonder. In half a dozen hours I sank back exhausted, with an aching frame. I rang the bell, ordered some refreshment, and walked about the room. The wine invigorated me and warmed up my sinking fancy, which, however, required little fuel. I set to again, and it was midnight before I retired to my bed.

The next day I again rose early, and with a bottle of wine at my side, for I was determined not to be disturbed, I dashed at it again. I was not less successful. This day I finished my first volume.

The third morning I had less inclination to write. I read over and corrected what I had composed. This warmed up my fancy, and in the afternoon I executed several chapters of my second volume.

Each day, although I had not in the least lost my desire of writing, I wrote slower. It was necessary for me each day to read my work from the beginning, before I felt the existence of the characters sufficiently real to invent their actions. Nevertheless, on the morning of the seventh day, the second and last volume was finished.

My book was a rapid sketch of the development of the poetic character. My hero was a youth whose mind was ever combating with his situation. Gifted with a highly poetic temperament, it was the office of his education to counteract all its ennobling tendencies. I traced the first indication of his predisposition, the growing consciousness of his powers, his reveries, his loneliness, his doubts, his moody misery, his ignorance of his art, his failures, his despair. I

painted his agonising and ineffectual habits to exist like those around him. I poured forth my own passion, when I described the fervour of his love.

All this was serious enough, and the most singular thing is, that, all this time it never struck me that I was delineating my own character. But now comes the curious part. In depicting the scenes of society in which my hero was forced to move, I suddenly dashed, not only into slashing satire, but even into malignant personality. All the bitterness of my heart, occasioned by my wretched existence among their false circles, found its full vent. Never was anything so imprudent. Everybody figured, and all parties and opinions alike suffered. The same hand that immortalised the cream cheeses of poor Count de Moltke now avenged his wrongs.

For the work itself, it was altogether a most crude performance, teeming with innumerable faults. It was entirely deficient in art. The principal character, although forcibly conceived, for it was founded on truth, was not sufficiently developed. Of course the others were much less so. The incidents were unnatural, the serious characters exaggerations, the comic ones caricatures; the wit was too often flippant, the philosophy too often forced; yet the vigour was remarkable, the licence of an uncurbed imagination not without charms and on, the whole, there breathed a freshness which is rarely found, and which, perhaps, with all my art and knowledge, I may never again afford: and, indeed, when I recall the heat with which this little work was written, I am convinced that, with all its errors, the spark of true creation animated its fiery page.

Such is the history of 'Manstein,' a work which exercised a strange influence on my destiny.

CHAPTER XIII.

An Old Head on Young Shoulders.

I PERSONALLY entrusted my novel to the same bookseller to whom I had anonymously submitted my tragedy. He required no persuasion to have the honour of introducing it to the world; and, had he hesitated, I would myself have willingly undertaken the charge, for I was resolved to undergo the ordeal. I swore him to the closest secresy, and, as mystery is part of the craft, I had confidence that his interest would prompt him to maintain his honour.

All now being finished, I suddenly and naturally reassumed my obvious and usual character. The pouring forth had relieved my mind, and the strong feelings that had prompted it having subsided, I felt a little of the lassitude which succeeds exertion. That reaction to which ardent and inexperienced minds are subject, now also occurred. I lost my confidence in my effusion. It seemed impossible that anything I had written could succeed, and I felt that nothing but decided success could justify a person in my position to be an author. I half determined to recall the rash deposit, but a mixture of false shame and lingering

hope that I yet might be happily mistaken, dissuaded me. I resolved to think no more of it. It was an inconsiderate venture, but secresy would preserve me from public shame, and, as for my private mortification, I should at least derive from failure a beneficial conviction of my literary incompetency, and increased energy to follow up the path which fortune seemed to destine for my pursuit. Official circumstances occurred also at this moment, which imperatively demanded all my attention, and which, indeed, interested my feelings in no ordinary degree.

The throne of my royal master had been guaranteed to him by those famous treaties which, at the breaking up of that brilliant vision, the French empire, had been vainly considered by the great European powers as insuring the permanent settlement of Europe. A change of dynasty had placed the king in a delicate position; but, by his sage counsels and discreet conduct, the last burst of the revolutionary storm passed over without striking his diadem. One of the most distinguished instances of the ministerial dexterity of my father was the discovery of a latent inclination in certain of our powerful allies to favour the interests of the abdicated dynasty, and ultimately to dispute the succession, which, at the moment, distracted by the multiplicity of important and engrossing interests, they deemed themselves too hastily to have recognised. In this conjuncture, an appeal to arms on our part was idle, and all to which we could trust in bringing about a satisfactory adjustment of this paramount question was diplomatic ingenuity. For more than three years secret but active negotiations had been on foot to attain our end, and circumstances had now occurred which induced us to believe

that, by certain combinations, the result might be realised.

I took a great interest in these negotiations, and was the only person out of the cabinet to whom they were confided. The situation of the prince royal, himself a very accomplished personage, but whose unjust unpopularity offered no obstacle to the views of his enemies, extremely commanded my sympathy; the secresy, importance, and refined difficulty of the transactions called forth all the play of my invention. Although an affair which, according to etiquette, should have found its place in the Foreign Office, my father, on his promotion, did not think it fitting to transfer a business of so delicate a nature to another functionary, and he contrived to correspond upon it with foreign courts in his character of first minister. As his secretary I had been privy to all the details, and I continued therefore to assist him in the subsequent proceedings.

My father and myself materially differed as to the course expedient to be pursued. He flattered himself that everything might be brought about by negotiation, in which he was, indeed, unrivalled; and he often expatiated to me on the evident impossibility of the king having recourse to any other measures. For myself, when I remembered the time that had already passed without in any way advancing our desires, and believed, which I did firmly, that the conduct of the great Continental Powers in this comparatively unimportant affair, was only an indication of their resolution to promote the system on which they had based all the European relations, I myself could not refrain from expressing a wish to adopt a very different and far more earnest conduct.

In this state of affairs I was one day desired by my father to attend him at a secret conference with the ambassadors of the great Powers. My father flattered himself that he might this day obtain his long-desired end; and so interested was the monarch in the progress, as well as the result of our consultations, that he resolved to be present himself, although incognito.

The scene of the conference was the same palace whither my father had been summoned to receive the notification of his appointment as first minister. I can well recall the feelings with which, on the morning of the conference, I repaired to the palace with my father. We were muffled up in our pelisses, for the air was very sharp, but the sun was not without influence, and shone with great brilliancy. There are times when I am influenced by a species of what I may term happy audacity, for it is a mixture of recklessness and self-confidence which has a very felicitous effect upon the animal spirits. At these moments I never calculate consequences, yet everything seems to go right. I feel in good fortune; the ludicrous side of everything occurs to me; I think of nothing but grotesque images; I astonish people by bursting into laughter, apparently without a cause. Whatever is submitted to me I turn into ridicule. I shrug my shoulders, and speak epigrams.

I was in one of those moods on that day. My father could not comprehend me. He was very serious; but, instead of sympathising with his grave hopes and dull fears, I did nothing but ridicule their Excellencies whom we were going to meet, and perform to him an imaginary conference, in which he also figured.

We arrived at the palace. I became a little sobered. My father went to the king. I entered a hall, where the conference was to take place. It was a fine room, hung with trophies, and principally lighted by a large Gothic window. At the farther end near the fire, and portioned off by an Indian screen, was a round table, covered with green cloth, and surrounded by seats. The Austrian minister arrived. I walked up and down the hall with him for some minutes, ridiculing diplomacy. He was one of those persons who believe you have a direct object in everything you say, and my contradictory opinions upon all subjects were to him a fruitful source of puzzling meditation. He thought that I was one whose words ought to be marked, and I believe that my nonsense has often occasioned him a sleepless night. The other ministers soon assembled, and in a few minutes a small door opened at the top of the hall, and the king and my father appeared. We bowed, and took our seats. I, being the secretary, seated myself at the desk to take notes for the drawing up of the protocols.

We believed that the original idea of considering the great treaties as a guaranty to the individual only, and not to his successors, originated at Vienna. Indeed, it was the early acquaintance of my father with the Austrian minister that first assisted him in ascertaining this intention. We believed that the Russian Cabinet had heartily entered into this new reading; that Prussia supported it only in deference to the Court of St. Petersburg; and that France was scarcely reconciled to the proposed derangement by the impression that it materially assisted those principles of government, by a recurrence to which the

Cabinet of Versailles then began to be convinced they would alone maintain themselves.

Such had been our usual view of the state of opinion with respect to this question. It had been the object of my father to induce the French Court to join with that of St. James' in a strong demonstration in favour of the present system, and to indicate, in the event of that demonstration being fruitless, the possibility of their entering with the king into a tripartite treaty framed in pursuance of the spirit of the invalidated one. He trusted that to-day this demonstration might be made.

We entered into business. The object of our opponents was to deny that the tendency of certain acts of which we complained was inimical to the present dynasty, but to refrain from proving their sincerity by assenting to a new guaranty, on the plea that it was unnecessary; since the treaties must express all that was intended. Hours were wasted in multiplied discussions as to the meaning of particular clauses in particular treaties, and as to precedents to justify particular acts. Hours were wasted, for we did not advance. At length my father recurred to the spirit, rather than the letter of the affair; and in urging the necessity, for the peace of Europe and other high causes, that this affair should be settled without delay, he gave an excellent opportunity for the friends he had anticipated to come forward. They spoke, indeed, but in a very vague and unsatisfactory manner. I marked the lip of the Austrian minister curl, as if in derision, and the Russian arranged his papers as if all were now finished.

I knew my father well enough by this time to be convinced that, in spite of his apparently unaltered

mien, he was bitterly disappointed and annoyed. The king looked gloomy. There was a perfect silence. It was so awkward that the Austrian minister inquired of me the date of a particular treaty, merely to break the dead pause. I did not immediately answer him.

The whole morning my fancy had been busied with grotesque images. I had never been a moment impressed with the gravity of the proceedings. The presence of the king alone prevented me from constant raillery. When I recollected the exact nature of the business on which we were assembled, and then called to mind the characters who took part in the discussion, I could scarcely refrain from laughter. 'Voltaire would soon settle this,' I thought, 'and send Messieurs the Austrian, and the Russian, and the Prussian, with their moustaches, and hussar jackets, and furs, to their own country. What business have they to interfere with ours?' I was strongly impressed with the tyrannical injustice and wicked folly of the whole transaction. The great diplomatists appeared to me so many wild beasts ready to devour our innocent lamb of a sovereign, parleying only from jealousy who should first attack him.

The Austrian minister repeated his question as to the treaty, 'It matters not,' I replied; 'let us now proceed to business.' He looked a little surprised. 'Gentlemen,' I continued, 'you must be quite aware that this is the last conference his Majesty can permit us to hold upon a subject which ought never to have been discussed. The case is simple, and demands but little consideration. If the guaranty we justly require be not granted, his Majesty must have recourse to a popular appeal. We have no fear about the

result. We are prepared for it. His Majesty will acquire a new, and if possible, a stronger title to his crown; and see what you will occasion by your squeamishness to authenticate the right of a sovereign, who, although not the offspring of a dynasty, acquired his throne not by the voice of the people, and has been constantly recognised by all your courts; you will be the direct cause of a decided democratic demonstration in the election of a king by the people alone. For us, the result has no terrors. Your Excellencies are the best judges, whether your royal masters possess any territories in our vicinity which may be inoculated with our dangerous example.'

I was astounded by my audacity. Not till I had ceased speaking had I been aware of what I had dared to do. Once I shot a rapid glance at my father. His eyes were fixed on the ground, and I thought he looked a little pale. As I withdrew my glance, I caught the king's fiery eye, but its expression did not discourage me.

It is difficult to convey an idea of the success of my boldness. It could not enter the imagination of the diplomatists that any one could dare to speak, and particularly under such circumstances, without instructions and without authority. They looked upon me only as the mouthpiece of the royal intentions. They were alarmed at our great, and unwonted, and unexpected resolution; at the extreme danger and invisible results of our purposes. The English and French ministers, who watched every turn, made a vehement representation in our favour, and the conference broke up with an expression of irresolution and surprise in the countenances of our antagonists,

quite unusual with them, and which promised the speedy attainment of the satisfactory arrangement which shortly afterwards took place.

The conference broke up, my father retired with the king, and desired me to wait for him in the hall. I was alone. I was excited. I felt the triumph of success. I felt that I had done a great action. I felt all my energies. I walked up and down the hall in a frenzy of ambition, and I thirsted for action. There seemed to me no achievement of which I was not capable, and of which I was not ambitious. In imagination I shook thrones and founded empires. I felt myself a being born to breathe in an atmosphere of revolution.

My father came not. Time wore away, and the day died. It was one of those stern, sublime sunsets, which is almost the only appearance in the north in which nature enchanted me. I stood at the window, gazing on the burnished masses that for a moment were suspended in their fleeting and capricious beauty on the far horizon. I turned aside and looked at the rich trees suffused with the crimson light, and ever and anon irradiated by the dying shoots of a golden ray. The deer were stealing home to their bowers, and I watched them till their glancing forms gradually lost their lustre in the declining twilight. The glory had now departed, and all grew dim. A solitary star alone was shining in the grey sky, a bright and solitary star.

And as I gazed upon the sunset, and the star, and the dim beauties of the coming eve, my mind grew calm, and all the bravery of my late reverie passed away. And I felt indeed a disgust for all the worldliness on which I had been late pondering. And

there arose in my mind a desire to create things beautiful as that golden sun and that glittering star.

I heard my name. The hall was now darkened. In the distance stood my father. I joined him. He placed his arm affectionately in mine, and said to me, 'My son, you will be Prime Minister of . . . . ; perhaps something greater.'

CHAPTER XIV.

The New Novel.

AS WE drove home, everything seemed changed since the morning. My father was in high spirits; for him, even elated: I, on the contrary, was silent and thoughtful. This evening there was a ball at the palace, which, although little inclined, I felt obliged to attend.

I arrived late: the king was surrounded by a brilliant circle, and conversing with his usual felicitous affability. I would have withdrawn when I had made my obeisance, but his Majesty advanced a step and immediately addressed me. He conversed with me for some time. Few men possess a more captivating address than this sovereign. It was difficult at all times not to feel charmed, and now I was conscious that this mark of his favour recognised no ordinary claims to his confidence. I was the object of admiring envy. That night there were few in those saloons, crowded with the flower of the land, who did not covet my position. I alone was insensible to it. A vision of high mountains and deep blue lakes mingled with all the artificial splendour that dazzled around.

I longed to roam amid the solitude of nature, and disburden a mind teeming with creative sympathy.

I drew near a group which the pretty Baroness Engel was addressing with more than her usual animation. When she caught my eye, she beckoned me to join her, and said, 'O! Count Contarini, have you read "Manstein?"'

'"Manstein,"' I said in a careless tone. 'What is it?'

'Oh! you must get it directly. The oddest book that ever was written. We are all in it.'

'I hope not.'

'Oh, yes! all of us. I have not had time to make out the characters, I read it so quickly. My man only sent it to me this morning. I must get a key. Now, you, who are so clever, make me one.'

'I will look at it, if you really recommend me.'

'You must look at it. It is the oddest book that was ever written. Immensely clever, I assure you. I cannot exactly make it out.'

'This is certainly much in its favour. The obscure, as you know, is a principal ingredient of the sublime.'

'How odd you are! but really now, Count Contarini, get "Manstein." Every one must read it. As for your illustrious principal, Baron de Bragnaes, he is really hit off to the life.'

'Indeed,' I said, with concealed consternation.

'Oh! no one can mistake it. I thought I should have died with laughing. But we are all there. I am sure I know the author.'

'Who is it? who is it?' eagerly inquired the group.

'I do not *know,* mind,' observed the Baroness. 'It is a conjecture, merely a conjecture. But I always find out everybody.'

'Oh! that you do,' said the group.

'Yes, I find them out by the style.'

'How clever you are!' exclaimed the group; 'but who is it?'

'Oh, I shall not betray him! Only I am quite convinced I know who it is.'

'Pray, pray tell us,' entreated the group.

'You need not look around, Matilda, he is not here. A friend of yours, Contarini. I thought that young Moskoffsky was in a great hurry to run off to St. Petersburg. And he has left us a legacy. We are all in it, I assure you,' she exclaimed to the one nearest, in an under but decisive tone.

I breathed again. 'Young Moskoffsky! To be sure it is,' I observed with an air of thoughtful conviction. 'Without reading a line, I have no doubt of it. I suspected that he meditated something. I must get "Manstein" directly, if it be by young Moskoffsky. Anything that young Moskoffsky writes must be worth reading. What an excellent letter he writes! You are my oracle, Baroness Engel; I have no doubt of your discrimination; but I suspect that a certain correspondence with a brilliant young Muscovite has assisted you in your discovery.'

'Be contented,' rejoined the Baroness, with a smile of affected mystery and pique, 'that there is one who can enlighten you, and be not curious as to the source. Ah, there is Countess Norberg! how well she looks to-night!'

I walked away to salute Christiana. As I moved through the elegant crowd, my nervous ear constantly caught half phrases, which often made me linger: 'Very satirical; very odd; very personal; very odd, indeed; what can it all be about? Do you

know? No, I do not; do you? Baroness Engel; all in it; must get it; very witty; very ſlippant. Who can it be? Young Moskoſſsky. Read it at once without stopping; never read anything so odd; ran oſſ to St. Petersburg; always thought him very clever. Who can the Duke of Twaddle mean? Ah! to be sure; I wonder it did not occur to me.'

I joined Christiana. I waltzed with her. I was on the point, once or twice, of asking her if she had read 'Manstein,' but did not dare. After the dance we walked away. Mademoiselle de Moltke, who, although young, was not charming, but intellectual, and who affected to think me a great genius because I had pasquinaded her father, stopped me.

'My dear Countess, how do you do? You look most delightfully to-night. Count Contarini, have you read "Manstein?" You never read anything! How can you say so? but you always say such things. You must read "Manstein." Everybody is reading it. It is full of imagination, and very personal indeed. Baroness Engel says we are all in it. You are there. You are Horace de Beaufort, who thinks everything, and everybody a bore; exactly like you, Count; what I have always said of you. Adieu! Mind you get "Manstein," and then come and talk it over with me. Now do, that's a good creature!' And this talkative Titania tripped away.

'You are wearied, Christiana, and these rooms are insufferably hot. You had better sit down.'

We seated ourselves in a retired part of the room. I observed an unusual smile upon the face of Christiana. Suddenly she said, with a slight flush, and not without emotion, 'I shall not betray you, Contarini, but I am convinced that you are the author of "Manstein."'

I was agitated; I could not immediately speak. I was ever different to Christiana from what I was to other people. I could not feign to her. I could not dissemble. My heart always opened to her; and it seemed to me almost blasphemy to address her in any other language than truth.

'You know me better than all others, Christiana. Indeed, you alone know me. But I would sooner hear that any one was considered the author of "Manstein" than myself.'

'You need not fear that I shall be indiscreet; but rest assured it cannot long be a secret.'

'Indeed,' I said. 'Why not?'

'Oh! Contarini, it is too like.'

'Like whom?'

'Nay! you affect ignorance.'

'Upon my honour, Christiana, I do not. Have the kindness to believe that there is at least one person in the world to whom I am not affected. If you mean that "Manstein" is a picture of myself, I can assure you solemnly that I never less thought of myself than when I drew it. I thought it was an ideal character.'

'It is that very circumstance that occasions the resemblance; for you, Contarini, whatever you may appear in this room, you are an ideal character.'

'You have read it?' I asked.

'I have read it,' she answered, seriously.

'And you do not admire it? I feel you do not. Nay! conceal nothing from me, Christiana, I can bear truth.'

'I admire its genius, Contarini. I wish that I could speak with equal approbation of its judgment. It will, I fear, make you many enemies.'

'You astonish me, Christiana. I do not care for enemies. I care for nobody, but for you. But why should it make me enemies?'

'I hope I am mistaken. It is very possible I am mistaken. I know not why I talk upon such subjects. It is foolish, it is impertinent; but the deep interest I have always taken in you, Contarini, occasions this conversation, and must excuse it.'

'Dear Christiana, how good, how very good you are!'

'And all these people whom you have ridiculed,—surely, Contarini, you have enough already who envy you; surely, Contarini, it was most imprudent.'

'People ridiculed! I never meant to ridicule any person in particular. I wrote with rapidity. I wrote of what I had seen and what I felt. There is nothing but truth in it.'

'You are not in a position, Contarini, to speak truth.'

'Then I must be in a miserable position, Christiana.'

'You are what you are, Contarini. All must admire you. You are in a very envied, I will hope a very enviable, position.'

'Alas! Christiana, I am the most miserable fellow that breathes upon this broad earth.'

She was silent.

'Dearest Christiana,' I continued, 'I speak to you as I would speak to no other person. Think not that I am one of those who deem it interesting to be considered unhappy. Such trifling I despise. What I say to you I would not confess to another human being. Among these people my vanity would be injured to be considered miserable. But I am unhappy,

really unhappy, most desolately wretched. Enviable position! But an hour since I was meditating how I could extricate myself from it! Alas! Christiana, I cannot ask you for counsel, for I know not what I desire, what I could wish; but I feel, each hour I feel more keenly, and never more keenly than when I am with you, that I was not made for this life, nor this life for me.'

'I cannot advise you, Contarini. What can I advise? But I am unhappy to find that you are. I grieve deeply that one, apparently with all that can make him happy, should still miss felicity. You are yet very young, Contarini, and I cannot but believe that you will still attain all you desire, and all that you deserve.'

'I desire nothing. I know not what I want. All I know is that what I possess I abhor.'

'Ah! Contarini, beware of your imagination.'

CHAPTER XV.

The Secret Out.

THE storm, that had been apprehended by the prescient affection of Christiana, surely burst. I do not conceive that my publisher betrayed me. I believe that internal evidence settled the affair. In a fortnight it was acknowledged by all that I was the author of 'Manstein,' and all were surprised that this authorship could, for a moment, have been a question. I can give no idea of the outcry. Everybody was in a passion, or affected to be painfully sensitive of their neighbours' wrongs. The very personality was ludicrously exaggerated. Everybody took a delight in detecting the originals of my portraits. Various keys were handed about, all different; and not content with recognising the very few decided sketches from life which there really were, and which were sufficiently obvious and not very malignant, they mischievously insisted that not a human shadow glided over my pages which might not be traced to its substance, and protested that the Austrian minister was the model of an old woman.

Those who were ridiculed insisted that the ridicule called in question the very first principles of so-

ciety. They talked of confidence violated, which never had been shared; and faith broken which never had been pledged. Never was so much nonsense talked about nothing since the days of the schoolmen. But nonsense, when earnest, is impressive, and sometimes takes you in. If you are in a hurry, you occasionally mistake it for sense. All the people who had read 'Manstein,' and been very much amused with it, began to think they were quite wrong, and that it was a very improper and wicked book, because this was daily reiterated in their ears by half-a-dozen bores, who had gained an immortality which they did not deserve. Such conduct, it was universally agreed, must not be encouraged. Where would it end? Everybody was alarmed. Men passed me in the street without notice; I received anonymous letters, and even many of my intimates grew cold. As I abhor explanations, I said nothing; and, although I was disgusted with the folly of much that I had heard, I contradicted nothing, however ridiculously false, and felt confident that, in time, the world would discover that they had been gulled into fighting the battle of a few individuals whom they despised. I found even a savage delight in being an object, for a moment, of public astonishment, and fear, and indignation. But the affair getting at last troublesome, I fought young De Bragnaes with swords in the Deer Park, and, having succeeded in pinking him, it was discovered that I was more amiable. For the rest, out of my immediate circle, the work had been from the first decidedly successful.

In all this not very agreeable affair, I was delighted by the conduct of Christiana. Although she seriously disapproved of what was really objectionable

in 'Manstein,' and although she was of so modest and quiet a temper that she unwillingly exercised that influence in society to which her rank and fortune and rare accomplishments entitled her, she suddenly became my active and even violent partisan, ridiculed the pretended wrongs and mock propriety that echoed around her, and, declaring that the author of 'Manstein' had only been bold enough to print that which all repeated, rallied them on their hypocrisy. Baroness Engel also was faithful, although a little jealous of the zeal of Christiana; and, between them, they laughed down the cabal, and so entirely turned the public feeling that, in less than a month, it was universally agreed that 'Manstein' was a most delightful book, and the satire, as they daintily phrased it, 'perfectly allowable.'

Amid all this tumult my father was silent. From no look, from no expression of his, could I gain a hint either of his approval or his disapprobation. I could not ascertain even if he had seen the book. The Countess Fleming of course read it immediately, and had not the slightest conception of what it was about. When she heard it was by me, she read it again, and was still more puzzled, but told me she was delighted. When the uproar took place, instead of repeating, which she often did, all the opinions she had caught, she became quite silent, and the volumes disappeared from her table. The storm blew over, and no bolt had shivered me, and the volumes crept forth from their mysterious retirement.

About two months after the publication of 'Manstein' appeared a new number of the great critical journal of the north of Europe. One of the works reviewed was my notorious production. I tore open

the leaves with a blended feeling of desire and fear, which I can yet remember. I felt prepared for the worst. I felt that such grave censors, however impossible it was to deny the decided genius of the work, and however eager they might be to hail the advent of an original mind, I felt that it was but reasonable and just, that they should disapprove the temper of the less elevated portions, and somewhat dispute the moral tendency of the more exalted.

With what horror, with what blank despair, with what supreme, appalling astonishment, did I find myself, for the first time in my life, a subject of the most reckless, the most malignant, and the most adroit ridicule. I was sacrificed, I was scalped. They scarcely condescended to notice my dreadful satire; except to remark, in passing, that, by-the-bye, I appeared to be as ill-tempered as I was imbecile. But all my eloquence, and all my fancy, and all the strong expression of my secret feelings! these ushers of the court of Apollo fairly laughed me off Parnassus, and held me up to public scorn, as exhibiting a lamentable instance of mingled pretension and weakness, and the most ludicrous specimen of literary delusion that it had ever been their unhappy office to castigate, and, as they hoped, to cure.

The criticism fell from my hand. A film floated over my vision; my knees trembled. I felt that sickness of heart, that we experience in our first serious scrape. I was ridiculous. It was time to die.

What did it signify? What was authorship to me? What did I care for their flimsy fame; I, who, not yet of age, was an important functionary of the state, and who might look to its highest confidence and honours. It was really too ludicrous. I tried to

laugh. I did smile very bitterly. The insolence of these fellows! Why! if I could not write, surely I was not a fool. I had done something. Nobody thought me a fool. On the contrary, everybody thought me a rather extraordinary person. What would they think now? I felt a qualm.

I buried my face in my hands; I summoned my thoughts to their last struggle; I penetrated into my very soul; and I felt the conviction, that literary creation was necessary to my existence, and that for it I was formed. And all the beautiful and dazzling forms that had figured in my youthful visions, rose up before me, crowned monarchs, and radiant heroes, and women brighter than day; but their looks were mournful, and they extended their arms with deprecating anguish, as if to entreat me not to desert them. And, in the magnificence of my emotions, and the beauty of my visions, the worldly sarcasms that had lately so shaken me seemed something of another and a lower existence; and I marvelled that for a moment this thin transient cloud could have shadowed the sunshine of my soul. And I arose, and lifted up my arm to heaven, and waved it like a banner, and I swore by the Nature that I adored, that in spite of all opposition, I would be an author; ay! the greatest of authors; and that far climes and distant ages should respond to the magic of my sympathetic page.

The agony was passed. I mused in calmness over the plans that I should pursue. I determined to ride down to my father's castle, and there mature them in solitude. Haunt of my early boyhood, fragrant bower of Egeria, sweet spot where I first scented the bud of my spring-like fancy, willingly would I linger in thy green retreats, no more to be wandered over

by one who now feels that he was ungrateful to thy beauty!

Now that I had resolved at all costs to quit my country, and to rescue myself from the fatal society in which I was placed, my impartial intelligence, no longer swayed by the conscious impossibility of emancipation, keenly examined and ascertained the precise nature and condition of my character. I perceived myself a being educated in systematic prejudice. I observed that I was the slave of custom, and never viewed any incident in relation to man in general, but only with reference to the particular and limited class of society of which I was a member. I recognised myself as selfish and affected. I was entirely ignorant of the principles of genuine morality, and I deeply felt that there was a total want of nature in everything connected with me. I had been educated without any regard to my particular or to my general nature; I had nothing to assist me in my knowledge of myself, and nothing to guide me in my conduct to others. The consequence of my unphilosophical education was my utter wretchedness.

I determined to re-educate myself. Conceiving myself a poet, I resolved to pursue a course which should develop and perfect my poetic power; and, never forgetting that I was a man, I was equally earnest, in a study of human nature, to discover a code of laws which should regulate my intercourse with my fellow-creatures. For both these sublime purposes it was necessary that I should form a comprehensive acquaintance with nature in all its varieties and conditions; and I resolved therefore to travel. I intended to detail all these feelings to my father, to conceal nothing from him, and request his approbation and

assistance. In the event of his opposition, I should depart without his sanction, for to depart I was resolved.

I remained a week at the castle musing over these projects, and entirely neglecting my duties, in the fulfilment of which, ever since the publication of 'Manstein,' I had been very remiss. Suddenly I received a summons from my father to repair to him without a moment's delay.

I hurried up to town, and hastened to his office. He was not there, but expecting me at home. I found him busied with his private secretary, and apparently very much engaged. He dismissed his secretary immediately, and then said, 'Contarini, they are rather troublesome in Norway. I leave town instantly for Bergen with the king. I regret it, because we shall not see each other for some little time. His Majesty has had the goodness, Contarini, to appoint you Secretary of Legation at the Court of London. Your appointment takes place at once, but I have obtained you leave of absence for a year. You will spend this attached to the Legation at Paris. I wish you to be well acquainted with the French people before you join their neighbours. In France and England you will see two great practical nations. It will do you good. I am sorry that I am so deeply engaged now. My chasseur, Lausanne, will travel with you. He is the best travelling servant in the world. He served me when I was your age. He is one of the few people in whom I have unlimited confidence. He is not only clever, but he is judicious. You will write to me as often as you can. Strelamb,' and here he rang the bell, 'Strelamb has prepared all necessary letters and bills for you.' Here

the functionary entered. 'Mr. Strelamb,' said my father, 'while you explain those papers to Count Contarini, I will write to the Duke of Montfort.'

I did not listen to the private secretary, I was so astonished. My father, in two minutes, had finished his letter. 'This may be useful to you, Contarini. It is to an old friend, and a powerful man. I would not lose time about your departure, Contarini. Mr. Strelamb, is there no answer from Baron Engel?'

'My lord, the carriage waits,' announced a servant.

'I must go. Adieu! Contarini. Write when you arrive at Paris. Mr. Strelamb, see Baron Engel to-night, and send me a courier with his answer. Adieu! Contarini.'

He extended me his hand. I touched it slightly. I never spoke. I was thunderstruck.

Suddenly I started up and rang the bell. 'Send me Lausanne!' I told the servant.

Lausanne appeared. Had my astonishment not been excited by a greater cause, I might have felt considerable surprise at my father delegating to me his confidential domestic. Lausanne was a Swiss, about my father's age, with a frame of iron, and all the virtues of his mountains. He was, I believe, the only person in whom my father placed implicit trust. But I thought not of this then. 'Lausanne, I understand you are now in my service.'

He bowed.

'I have no doubt I shall find cause to confirm the confidence which you have enjoyed in our house for more than twenty years. Is everything ready for my departure?'

'I had no idea that your Excellency had any immediate intention to depart.'

'I should like to be off to-night, good Lausanne. Ay! this very hour. When can I go?'

'Your Excellency's wardrobe must be prepared. Your Excellency has not given Carl any directions.'

'None. I do not mean to take him. I shall travel with you only.'

'Your Excellency's wardrobe——'

'May be sufficiently prepared in an hour, and Paris must supply the rest. In a word, Lausanne, can I leave this place by daybreak to-morrow? Think only of what is necessary. Show some of your old energy.'

'Your Excellency may rest assured,' said Lausanne, after some reflection, 'that everything will be prepared by that time.'

'It is well. Is the Countess at home?'

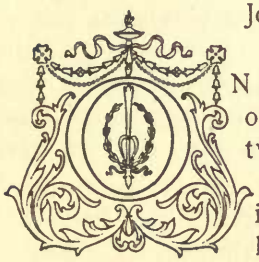
'The Countess quitted town yesterday on a visit to the Countess de Norberg.'

'The Countess de Norberg! I should have seen her too. Go, Lausanne, and be punctual. Carl will give you the keys. The Countess de Norberg, Christiana! Yes! I should have seen *her*. Ah! it is as well. I have no friends, and my adieus are brief; let them not be bitter. Farewell to the father that has no feeling! And thou, too, Scandinavia, stern soil in which I have too long lingered; think of me hereafter as of some exotic bird, which for a moment lost its way in thy cold heaven, but now has regained its course, and wings its flight to a more brilliant earth and a brighter sky!'

PART THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

Joys of Travel.



ON THE eighteenth day of August, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-six, I praise the Almighty Giver of all goodness, that, standing upon the height of Mount Jura, I beheld the whole range of the High Alps, with Mont Blanc in the centre, without a cloud—a mighty spectacle rarely beheld, for, on otherwise cloudless days, these sublime elevations are usually veiled.

I accepted this majestic vision as a good omen. It seemed that nature received me in her fullest charms. I was for some time so entranced that I did not observe the spreading and shining scene which opened far beneath me. The mountains, in ranges gradually diminishing, terminated in isolated masses, whose enormous forms, in deep shade, beautifully contrasted with the glittering glaciers of the higher peaks, and rose out of a plain covered with fair towns and bright châteaux, embowered in woods of

chestnut, and vines festooning in orchards and cornfields. Through the centre of the plain, a deep blue lake wound its way, which, viewed from the height of Jura, seemed like a purple girdle carelessly thrown upon some imperial robe.

I had remained in Paris only a few days, and, without offering any explanation to our minister, or even signifying my intention to Lausanne, had quitted that city with the determination of reaching Venice without delay. Now that it is probable I may never again cross the mountains, I often regret that I neglected this opportunity of becoming more acquainted with the French people. My head was then full of fantasies, and I looked upon the French as an antipoetical nation; but I have since often regretted that I omitted this occasion of becoming acquainted with a race who exercise so powerful an influence over civilisation.

I had thought of Switzerland only as of a rude barrier between me and the far object of my desires. The impression that this extraordinary country made upon me was perhaps increased by my previous thoughts having so little brooded over the idea of it. It was in Switzerland that I first felt how the constant contemplation of sublime creation develops the poetic power. It was here that I first began to study nature. Those forests of black gigantic pines, rising out of the deep snows; those tall white cataracts, leaping like headstrong youth into the world, and dashing from their precipices, as if allured by the beautiful delusion of their own rainbow mist; those mighty clouds sailing beneath my feet or clinging to the bosoms of the dark green mountains, or boiling up like a spell from the invisible and unfathomable

depths; the fell avalanche, fleet as a spirit of evil, terrific when its sound suddenly breaks upon the almighty silence, scarcely less terrible when we gaze upon its crumbling and pallid frame, varied only by the presence of one or two blasted firs; the head of a mountain loosening from its brother peak, rooting up, in the roar of its rapid rush, a whole forest of pines, and covering the earth for miles with elephantine masses; the supernatural extent of landscape that opens to us new worlds; the strong eagles, and the strange wild birds that suddenly cross you in your path, and stare, and shrieking fly; and all the soft sights of joy and loveliness that mingle with these sublime and savage spectacles, the rich pastures, and the numerous flocks, and the golden bees, and the wild flowers, and the carved and painted cottages, and the simple manners and the primeval grace,—wherever I moved I was in turn appalled or enchanted, but, whatever I beheld, new images ever sprang up in my mind and new feelings ever crowded on my fancy.

There is something magical in the mountain air. There my heart is light, my spirits cheerful, everything is exhilarating; there I am in every respect a different being from what I am in lowlands. I cannot even think; I dissolve into a delicious reverie, in which everything occurs to me without effort. Whatever passes before me gives birth in my mind to a new character, a new image, a new train of fancies. I sing, I shout, I compose aloud, but without premeditation, without any attempt to guide my imagination by my reason. How often, after journeying along the wild muletrack, how often, on a sunny day, have I suddenly thrown myself upon the turf, rev-

elled in my existence, and then as hastily jumped up and raised the wild birds with a wilder scream. I think that these involuntary bursts must have been occasioned by the unconscious influence of extreme health. As for myself, when I succeed in faintly recalling the rapture which I have experienced in these solitary rambles, and muse over the flood of fancy which then seemed to pour itself over my whole being, and gush out of every feeling and every object, I contrast, with mortification, those warm and pregnant hours with this cold record of my maturer age.

I remember that, when I first attempted to write, I had a great desire to indulge in simile, and that I never could succeed in gratifying my wish. This inability, more than any other circumstance, convinced me that I was not a poet. Even in 'Manstein,' which was written in a storm, and without any reflection, there are, I believe, few images, and those, probably, are all copied from books. That which surprised and gratified me most, when roving about Switzerland, was the sudden development of the faculty of illustrating my thoughts and feelings which took place. Every object that crossed me in some way associated itself with my moral emotions. Not a mountain, or lake, or river, not a tree, or flower, or bird, that did not blend with some thought, or fancy, or passion, and become the lively personification of conceptions that lie sleeping in abstraction.

It is singular that, with all this, I never felt any desire to write. I never thought of writing. I never thought of the future, or of man, or fame. I was content to exist. I began from this moment to suspect, what I have since learnt firmly to believe, that the sense of existence is the greatest happiness; and

that, deprived of every worldly advantage which is supposed so necessary to our felicity, life, provided a man be not immured in a dungeon, must nevertheless be inexpressibly delightful. If, in striking the balance of sensation, misery were found to predominate, no human being would endure the curse of existence; but however vast may be the wretchedness occasioned to us by the accidents of life, the certain sum of happiness, which is always supplied by our admirably-contrived being, ever supports us under the burden. Those who are sufficiently interested with my biography to proceed with it, will find, as they advance, that this is a subject on which I am qualified to offer an opinion.

I returned from these glowing rambles to my headquarters, which was usually Geneva. I returned like the bees, laden with treasure. I mused over all the beautiful images that had occurred to me, and all the new characters that had risen in my mind, and all the observations of Nature which hereafter would perhaps permit me to delineate what was beautiful. For, the moment that I mingled again with men, I wished to influence them. But I had no immediate or definite intention of appealing to their sympathies. Each hour I was more conscious of the long apprenticeship that was necessary in the cunning craft for which, as I conceived, I possessed a predisposition. I thought of 'Manstein' as of a picture painted by a madman in the dark; and when I remembered that crude performance, and gazed upon the beauty, and the harmony, and the fitting parts of the great creations around me, my cheek has often burned, even in solitude.

In these moments, rather of humility than despondence, I would fly for consolation to the blue waters

of that beautiful lake, whose shores have ever been the favourite haunt of genius, the fair and gentle Leman.

Nor is there indeed in nature a sight more lovely than to watch, at decline of day, the last embrace of the sun lingering on the rosy glaciers of the White Mountain. Soon, too soon, the great luminary dies; the warm peaks subside into purple and then die into a ghostly white; but soon, ah! not too soon, the moon springs up from behind a mountain, flings over the lake a stream of light, and the sharp glaciers glitter like silver.

I have often passed the whole night upon these enchanted waters, contemplating their beautiful variety; and, indeed, if anything can console one for the absence of the moon and stars, it would be to watch the lightning, on a dark night, on this superb lake. It is incessant, and sometimes in four or five different places at the same time. In the morning Leman loses its ultramarine tint, and is covered with the shadows of mountains and châteaux.

In mountain valleys it is beautiful to watch the effect of the rising and setting of the sun. The high peaks are first illumined, the soft yellow light then tips the lower elevations, and the bright golden showers soon bathe the whole valley, excepting a dark streak at the bottom, which is often not visited by sunlight. The effect of sunset is perhaps still more lovely. The highest peaks are those which the sun loves most. One by one the mountains, according to their elevation, steal into darkness, and the rosy tint is often suffused over the peaks and glaciers of Mont Blanc, while the whole world below is enveloped in the darkest twilight.

What is it that makes me dwell upon these scenes, which, with all their loveliness, I have never again visited? Is it, indeed, the memory of their extreme beauty, or of the happy hours they afforded me; or is it because I am approaching a period of my life which I sometimes feel I shall never have courage to delineate?

CHAPTER II.

A Vision.

HE thunder roared, the flashing lightning revealed only one universal mist, the wind tore up the pines by their roots, and flung them down into the valley, the rain descended in inundating gusts.

When once I had resolved to quit Geneva, my desire to reach Venice returned upon me in all its original force. I had travelled to the foot of the Simplon without a moment's delay, and now I had the mortification to be detained there in a wretched mountain village, intersected by a torrent whose roar was deafening, and with large white clouds sailing about the streets.

The storm had lasted three days; no one had ever heard of such a storm at this time of the year; it was quite impossible to pass; it was quite impossible to say when it would end, or what would happen. The poor people only hoped that no evil was impending over the village of Brieg. As for myself, when, day after day, I awoke only to find the thunder more awful, the lightning more vivid, and the mist more gloomy, I began to believe that my two angels

were combating on the height of Simplon, and that some supernatural and perhaps beneficent power would willingly prevent me from entering Italy.

I retired to bed, I flung my cloak upon a chair opposite to a blazing wood fire, and I soon fell asleep. I dreamed that I was in the vast hall of a palace, and that it was full of reverend and bearded men in rich dresses. They were seated at a council table, upon which their eyes were fixed, and I, who had recently entered, stood aside. And suddenly the President raised his head, and observed me, and beckoned to me with much dignity. And I advanced to him, and he extended to me his hand, and said, with a gracious smile, *'You have been long expected.'*

The council broke up, the members dispersed, and by his desire I followed the President. And we entered another chamber, which was smaller, but covered with pictures, and on one side of the door was a portrait of Julius Cæsar, and on the other one of myself. And my guide turned his head, and pointing to the paintings, said, *'You see you have been long expected. There is a great resemblance between you and your uncle.'*

And my companion suddenly disappeared, and being alone I walked up to a large window, but I could distinguish nothing, except when the lightning revealed the thick gloom. And the thunder rolled over the palace. And I knelt down and prayed, and suddenly the window was irradiated, and the bright form of a female appeared. Her fair hair reached beneath her waist, her countenance was melancholy yet seraphic. In her hand she held a crucifix. And I said, 'O, blessed Magdalen, have you at last returned? I have been long wandering in the wilderness, and

methought you had forgotten me. And indeed I am about again to go forth, but Heaven frowns upon my pilgrimage.' And she smiled and said, '*Sunshine succeeds storm. You have been long expected.*' And, as she spoke, she vanished, and I looked again through the window, and beheld a beautiful city very fair in the sun. Its marble palaces rose on each side of a broad canal, and a multitude of boats skimmed over the blue water. And I knew where I was. And I descended from the palace to the brink of the canal, and my original guide saluted me, and in his company I entered a gondola.

A clap of thunder broke over the very house and woke me. I jumped up in my bed, and stared. I beheld sitting in my room the same venerable personage, in whose presence I had the moment before found myself. The embers of the fire shot forth a faint and flickering light. I felt that I had been asleep and had dreamed. I even remembered where I was. I was not in any way confused. Yet before me was this mysterious companion, gazing upon me with the same gracious dignity with which he had at first beheld me in the palace. I remained sitting up in my bed, staring with starting eyes and opened mouth. Gradually his image became fainter and fainter. His features melted away, his form also soon dissolved, and I discovered only the empty chair and hanging cloak.

I jumped out of bed. The storm still raged. A bell was tolling. Few things are more awful than a bell tolling in a storm. It was about three hours past midnight. I called Lausanne.

'Lausanne,' I said, 'I am resolved to cross the mountain by sunrise, come what come may. Offer any rewards, make what promises you please, but I am

resolved to cross, even in the teeth of an avalanche.' Although I am a person easily managed in little matters, and especially by servants, I spoke in a tone which Lausanne sufficiently knew me to feel to be decisive. He was not one of those men who make or imagine difficulties, but on the contrary, fruitful in discovering expedients, yet he seemed not a little surprised, and slightly hesitated.

'Lausanne,' I said, 'if you think it too dangerous to venture, I release you from your duty. But cross the mountain I shall, and in two or three hours, even if I cross it alone.'

He quitted the room. I threw a fresh log upon the fire, and repeated to myself, *'I have been long expected.'*

CHAPTER III.

Italy!

BEFORE six o'clock all was prepared. Besides the postilions, Lausanne engaged several guides. I think we must have been about six hours ascending, certainly not more, and this does not much exceed the usual course. I had occasion on this, as I have since in many other conjunctures, to observe what an admirable animal is man when thrown upon his own resources in danger. The coolness, the courage, the perseverance, the acuteness, and the kindness with which my companions deported themselves, were as remarkable as they were delightful. As for myself, I could do nothing but lean back in the carriage and trust to their experience and energy. It was indeed awful. We were almost always enveloped in mist, and if a violent gust for a moment dissipated the vapour, it was only to afford a glimpse of the precipices on whose very brink we were making our way. Nothing is more terrific than the near roar of a cataract in the dark. It is horrible. As for myself, I will confess that I was more than once fairly frightened, and when the agitated shouts of my compan-

ions indicated the imminence of the impending danger, I felt very much like a man who had raised a devil that he cannot lay.

The storm was only on the lower part of the mountain. As we ascended, it became clearer. The scene was absolute desolation. At length we arrived at a small table-land, surrounded by slight elevations, the whole covered with eternal snow. Cataracts were coursing down these hills in all directions, and the plain was covered with the chaotic forms of crumbled avalanches. The sky was a thick dingy white. My men gave a loud shout of exultation and welcomed me to the summit of Simplon.

Here I shook hands and parted with my faithful guides. As I was enveloping myself in my furs, the clouds broke towards Italy, and a beautiful streak of blue sky seemed the harbinger of the Ausonian heaven. I felt in high spirits, and we dashed down the descent with an ease and rapidity that pleasantly reminded me, by the contrast, of our late labour.

A descent down one of the high Alps is a fine thing. It is very exciting to scamper through one of those sublime tunnels, cut through solid rocks six thousand feet above the ocean; to whirl along those splendid galleries over precipices whose terminations are invisible; to gallop through passes, as if you were flying from the companions of the avalanches which are dissolving at your feet; to spin over bridges spanning a roaring and rushing torrent, and to dash through narrow gorges backed with eternal snows peeping over the nearer and blacker background.

It was a sudden turn. Never shall I forget it. I called to Lausanne to stop, and notwithstanding the difficulty, they clogged the wheels with stones. It

was a sudden turn of the road. It came upon me like a spirit. The quick change of scenery around me had disturbed my mind, and prevented me from dwelling upon the idea. So it came upon me unexpectedly, most, most unexpectedly. Ah, why did I not then die? I was too happy. I stood up to gaze for the first time upon Italy, and the tears stole down my cheek.

Yes! yes! I at length gazed upon those beautiful and glittering plains. Yes! yes! I at length beheld those purple mountains, and drank the balmy breath of that fragrant and liquid air. After such longing, after all the dull misery of my melancholy life, was this great boon indeed accorded me! Why, why did I not then die? I was indeed, indeed, too happy!

CHAPTER IV.

The Vision Fulfilled.

I AWOKE. I asked myself, 'Am I indeed in Italy?' I could scarcely refrain from shouting with joy. While dressing, I asked many questions of Lausanne, that his answers might assure me of this incredible happiness. When he left the room, I danced about the chamber like a madman.

'Am I indeed in Italy?' My morning's journey was the most satisfactory answer. Although, of late, the business of my life had been only to admire nature, my progress was nevertheless one uninterrupted gaze.

Those azure mountains, those shining lakes, those gardens, and palaces, and statues, those cupolaed convents crowning luxuriant wooded hills, and flanked by a single but most graceful tree, the undulation of shore, the projecting headland, the receding bay, the roadside uninclosed, yet bounded with walnut, and vine, and fig, and acacia, and almond trees, bending down under their bursting fruit, the wonderful effect of light and shade, the trunks of all the trees, looking black as ebony, and their thick foliage, from the excessive light, quite thin and transparent in the sunshine, the white sparkling villages, each with a church

with a tall slender tower, and large melons trailing over the marble wall; and, above all, the extended prospect, so striking after the gloom of Alpine passes, and so different in its sunny light, from the reflected, unearthly glare of eternal snows; yes, yes, this indeed was Italy! I could not doubt my felicity, even if I had not marked, with curious admiration, the black eyes and picturesque forms, that were flashing and glancing about me in all directions.

Milan, with its poetic opera, and Verona, gay amid the mingling relics of two thousand years, and Vicenza, with its Palladian palaces and gates of triumph, and pensive Padua, with its studious colonnades,—I tore myself from their attractions. Their choicest memorials only accelerated my progress, only made me more anxious to gain the chief seat of the wonderful and romantic people who had planted in all their market-places the winged lion of St. Mark, and raised their wild and Saracenic piles between Roman amphitheatres and feudal castles.

I was upon the Brenta, upon that river over which I had so often mused beneath the rigour of a Scandinavian heaven; the Brenta was before me, with all those villas, which, in their number, their variety, and their splendour, form the only modern creation that can be ranked with the Baiæ of imperial Rome. I had quitted Padua at an early hour to reach Venice before sunset. Half way, the horses jibbed on the sandy road, and a spring of the carriage was broken. To pass the time, while this accident was repairing, Lausanne suggested to me to visit a villa at hand, which was celebrated for the beauty of its architecture and gardens. It was inhabited only by an old domestic, who attended me over the building. The

vast suite of chambers, and their splendid although ancient decorations, were the first evidence that I had yet encountered of that domestic magnificence of the Venetians of which I had heard so much. I walked forth into the gardens alone, to rid myself of the garrulous domestic. I proceeded along a majestic terrace, covered with orange trees, at the end of which was a beautiful chapel. The door was unlocked, and I entered. A large crucifix of ebony was placed upon the altar, and partly concealed a picture placed over the Holy Table. Yet the picture could not escape me. Oh! no; it could not escape me, for it was the original of that famous Magdalen which had, so many years before, and in so different a place, produced so great a revolution in my feelings. I remained before it some time; and as I gazed upon it, the history of my life was again acted before me. I quitted the chapel, revolving in my mind this strange coincidence, and crossing the lawn, I came to a temple which a fanciful possessor had dedicated to his friends. Over the portal was an inscription. I raised my sight and read, *'Enter; you have been long expected!'*

I started, and looked around, but all was silent. I turned pale, and hesitated to go in. I examined the inscription again. My courage rallied, and I found myself in a small, but elegant banqueting house, furnished, but apparently long disused. I threw myself into a seat at the head of the table, and, full of a rising superstition, I almost expected that some of the venerable personages of my dream would enter to share my feast. They came not; half an hour passed away; I rose, and, without premeditation, I wrote upon the wall, *'If I have been long expected, I have at length arrived. Be you also obedient to the call.'*

CHAPTER V.

The Home of the Contarini.

AN HOUR before sunset, I arrived at Fusina, and beheld, four or five miles out at sea, the towers and cupolas of Venice suffused with a rich golden light, and rising out of the bright blue waters. Not an exclamation escaped me. I felt like a man who has achieved a great object. I was full of calm exultation, but the strange incident of the morning made me serious and pensive.

As our gondolas glided over the great Lagune, the excitement of the spectacle reanimated me. The buildings that I had so fondly studied in books and pictures rose up before me. I knew them all; I required no Cicerone. One by one, I caught the hooded cupolas of St. Mark, the tall Campanile red in the sun, the Morescoe Palace of the Doges, the deadly Bridge of Sighs, and the dark structure to which it leads. Here my gondola quitted the Lagune, and, turning up a small canal, and passing under a bridge which connected the quays, stopped at the steps of a palace.

I ascended a staircase of marble, I passed through a gallery crowded with statues, I was ushered into

spacious apartments, the floors of which were marble, and the hangings satin. The ceilings were painted by Tintoretto and his scholars, and were full of Turkish trophies and triumphs over the Ottomite. The furniture was of the same rich material as the hangings, and the gilding, although of two hundred years' duration, as bright and burnished as the costly equipment of a modern palace. From my balcony of blinds, I looked upon the great Lagune. It was one of those glorious sunsets which render Venice, in spite of her degradation, still famous. The sky and sea vied in the brilliant multiplicity of their blended tints. The tall shadows of her Palladian churches flung themselves over the glowing and transparent wave out of which they sprang. The quays were crowded with joyous groups, and the black gondolas flitted like sea-serpents over the red and rippling waters.

I hastened to the Place of St. Mark. It was crowded and illuminated. Three gorgeous flags waved on the mighty staffs, which are opposite to the church in all the old drawings, and which once bore the standards of Candia, and Cyprus, and the Morea. The coffee-houses were full, and gay parties, seated on chairs, in the open air, listened to the music of military bands, while they refreshed themselves with confectionery so rich and fanciful that it excites the admiration of all travellers, but which I since discovered in Turkey to be Oriental. The variety of costume was also great. The dress of the lower orders in Venice is still unchanged; many of the middle classes yet wear the cap and cloak. The Hungarian and the German military, and the bearded Jew, with his black velvet cap and flowing robes, are observed with

curiosity. A few days also before my arrival, the Austrian squadron had carried into Venice a Turkish ship and two Greek vessels, which had violated the neutrality. Their crews now mingled with the crowd. I beheld, for the first time, the haughty and turbaned Ottoman, sitting cross-legged on his carpet under a colonnade, sipping his coffee and smoking a long chibouque, and the Greeks, with their small red caps, their high foreheads, and arched eyebrows.

Can this be modern Venice, I thought? Can this be the silent, and gloomy, and decaying city, over whose dishonourable misery I have so often wept? Could it ever have been more enchanting? Are not these indeed still subjects of a Doge, and still the bridegrooms of the ocean? Alas, the brilliant scene was as unusual as unexpected, and was accounted for by its being the feast day of a favourite Saint. Nevertheless, I rejoiced at the unaccustomed appearance of the city at my entrance, and still I recall with pleasure the delusive moments, when, strolling about the Place of St. Mark, the first evening that I was in Venice, I mingled for a moment in a scene that reminded me of her lost light-heartedness, and of that unrivalled gaiety which so long captivated polished Europe.

The moon was now in her pride. I wandered once more to the quay, and heard for the first time a serenade. A juggler was conjuring in a circle under the walls of my hotel, and an itinerant opera was performing on the bridge. It is by moonlight that Venice is indeed an enchanted city. The effect of the floods of silver light upon the twinkling fretwork of the Moresco architecture, the total absence of all harsh sounds, the never-ceasing music on the waters,

produce an effect upon the mind which cannot be experienced in any other city. As I stood gazing upon the broad track of brilliant light that quivered over the Lagune, a gondolier saluted me. I entered his boat, and desired him to row me to the Grand Canal.

The marble palaces of my ancestors rose on each side, like a series of vast and solemn temples. How sublime were their broad fronts bathed in the mystic light, whose softened tints concealed the ravages of Time, and made us dream only of their eternity! And could these great creations ever die! I viewed them with a devotion which I cannot believe to have been surpassed in the most patriotic period of the Republic. How willingly would I have given my life to have once more filled their mighty halls with the proud retainers of their free and victorious nobles!

As I proceeded along the canal, and retired from the quarter of St. Mark, the sounds of merriment gradually died away. The light string of a guitar alone tinkled in the distance, and the lamp of a gondola, swiftly shooting by, indicated some gay, perhaps anxious, youth, hastening to the general rendezvous of festivity and love. The course of the canal bent, and the moon was hidden behind a broad, thick arch, which black, yet sharply defined, spanned the breadth of the water. I beheld the famous Rialto.

Was it possible? was it true? was I not all this time in a reverie gazing upon a drawing in Winter's studio! Was it not some delicious dream? some delicious dream from which perhaps this moment I was about to be roused to cold, dull life? I struggled not to wake, yet, from a nervous desire to move and put

the vision to the test, I ordered the gondolier to row to the side of the canal, jumped out, and hurried to the bridge. Each moment, I expected that the arch would tremble and part, and that the surrounding palaces would dissolve into mist, that the lights would be extinguished and the music cease, and that I should find myself in my old chamber in my father's house.

I hurried along; I was anxious to reach the centre of the bridge before I woke. It seemed like the crowning incident of a dream, which, it is remarkable, never occurs, and which, from the very anxiety it occasions, only succeeds in breaking our magical slumbers.

I stood upon Rialto; I beheld on each side of me, rising out of the waters, which they shadowed with their solemn image, those colossal and gorgeous structures raised from the spoils of the teeming Orient, with their pillars of rare marbles, and their costly portals of jasper, and porphyry, and agate; I beheld them ranged in majestic order, and streaming with the liquid moonlight. Within these walls my fathers revelled!

I bowed my head, and covered my face with my hands. I could gaze no more upon that fair but melancholy vision.

A loud but melodious chorus broke upon the air. I looked up and marked the tumultuous waving of many torches, and heard the trampling of an approaching multitude. They were at the foot of the bridge. They advanced, they approached. A choir of priests, bearing in triumph the figure of a Saint, and followed by a vast crowd carrying lights, and garlands, and banners, and joining in a joyful hymn, swept by me. As they passed they sung—

'WAVE YOUR BANNERS! SOUND, SOUND YOUR VOICES! FOR HE HAS COME, HE HAS COME! OUR SAINT AND OUR LORD! HE HAS COME, IN PRIDE AND IN GLORY, TO GREET WITH LOVE HIS ADRIAN BRIDE.'

It is singular, but these words struck me as applicable to myself. The dream at the foot of the Alps, and the inscription in the garden on the Brenta, and the picture in the chapel, there was a connection in all these strange incidents, which indeed harmonised with my early life and feelings. I fully believed myself the object of an omnipotent Destiny, over which I had no control. I delivered myself up without a struggle to the eventful course of time. I returned home pensive, yet prepared for a great career, and when the drum of the Hungarian guard sounded as I entered the Lagune, I could not help fancying that its hurried note was ominous of surprise and consternation. I remembered that, when a boy, sauntering with Musæus, I believed that I had a predisposition for conspiracies, and I could not forget that, of all places in the world, Venice was the one in which I should most desire to find myself a conspirator.

I returned to the hotel, but, as I was little inclined to slumber, I remained walking up and down the gallery, which, on my arrival, amid the excitement of so many distracting objects, I had but slightly noticed. I was struck by its size and its magnificence, and, as I looked upon the long row of statues gleaming in the white moonlight, I could not refrain from pondering over the melancholy fortunes of the high race who had lost this sumptuous inheritance commemorating, even in its present base uses, their noble exploits, magnificent tastes, and costly habits.

Lausanne entered. I inquired, if he knew to what family of the Republic this building had originally belonged?

'This was the Palazzo Contarini, sir.'

I was glad that he could not mark my agitation.

'I thought,' I rejoined after a moment's hesitation, 'I thought the Palazzo Contarini was on the Grand Canal.'

'There is a Palazzo Contarini on the Grand Canal, sir, but this is the original palace of the House. When I travelled with my lord, twenty-five years ago, and was at Venice, the Contarini family still maintained both establishments.'

'And now?' I inquired. This was the first time that I had ever held any conversation with Lausanne, for, although I was greatly pleased with his talents, and could not be insensible to his ever watchful care, I had from the first suspected that he was a secret agent of my father, and although I thought fit to avail myself of his abilities, I had studiously withheld from him my confidence.

'The family of Contarini is, I believe, extinct,' replied Lausanne.

'Ah!' Then thinking that something should be said to account for my ignorance of that with which, apparently, I ought to have been well acquainted, I added in a careless voice, 'We have never kept up any intercourse with our Italian connections, which I do not regret, for I shall not enter into society here.'

The moment that I uttered this I felt the weakness of attempting to mystify Lausanne, who probably knew much more of the reasons of this non-intercourse than myself. He was moving away, when I called him back with the intention of speaking to him

fully upon the subject of my early speculations. I longed to converse with him about my mother, and my father's youth, about everything that had happened.

'Lausanne,' I said.

He returned. The moon shone brightly upon his imperturbable and inscrutable countenance. I saw only my father's spy. A feeling of false shame prevented me from speaking. I did not like frankly to confess my ignorance upon such delicate subjects to one who would probably affirm his inability to enlighten me, and I knew enough of him to be convinced that I could not acquire by stratagem that which he would not willingly communicate.

'Lausanne,' I said, 'take lights into my room. I am going to bed.'

CHAPTER VI.

The Aphrodite of Cities.

ANOTHER sun rose upon Venice, and presented to me the city, whose image I had so early acquired. In the heart of a multitude, there was stillness. I looked out from the balcony on the crowded quays of yesterday; one or two idle porters were stretched in sleep on the scorching pavement, and a solitary gondola stole over the gleaming waters. This was all.

It was the Villeggiatura, and the absence of the nobility from the city invested it with an aspect even more deserted than it would otherwise have exhibited. I cared not for this. For me, indeed, Venice, silent and desolate, owned a greater charm than it could have commanded with all its feeble imitation of the worthless bustle of a modern metropolis. I congratulated myself on the choice season of the year in which I had arrived at this enchanting city. I do not think that I could have endured to be disturbed by the frivolous sights and sounds of society, before I had formed a full acquaintance with all those marvels of art that command our constant admiration while gliding about the lost capital of the Doges, and before I

had yielded a free flow to those feelings of poetic melancholy which swell up in the soul as we contemplate this memorable theatre of human action, wherein have been performed so many of man's most famous and most graceful deeds.

If I were to assign the particular quality which conduces to that dreamy and voluptuous existence which men of high imagination experience in Venice, I should describe it as the feeling of abstraction which is remarkable in that city and peculiar to it. Venice is the only city which can yield the magical delights of solitude. All is still and silent. No rude sound disturbs your reveries; Fancy, therefore, is not put to flight. No rude sound distracts your self-consciousness. This renders existence intense. We feel everything. And we feel thus keenly in a city not only eminently beautiful, not only abounding in wonderful creations of art, but each step of which is hallowed ground, quick with associations that, in their more various nature, their nearer relation to ourselves, and perhaps their more picturesque character, exercise a greater influence over the imagination than the more antique story of Greece and Rome. We feel all this in a city, too, which although her lustre be indeed dimmed, can still count among her daughters maidens fairer than the orient pearls with which her warriors once loved to deck them. Poetry, Tradition, and Love, these are the graces that have invested with an ever charming cestus this Aphrodite of cities.

As for myself, ere the year drew to a close, I was so captivated with the life of blended contemplation and pleasure which I led in this charming city, that I entirely forgot my great plan of comprehensive travel that was to induce such important results; and, not

conceiving that earth could yield me a spot where time could flow on in a more beautiful and tranquil measure, more exempt from worldly anxiety, and more free from vulgar thoughts, I determined to become a Venetian resident. So I quitted the house of my fathers, which its proprietor would not give up to me, and in which, under its present fortune, I could not bear to live, converted Lausanne into a major-domo, and engaged a palace on the Grand Canal.

CHAPTER VII.

A Fair Suppliant.

THERE is in Venice a very ancient church, situate in an obscure quarter of the city, whither I was in the habit of often resorting. It is full of the tombs of Contarinis. Two doges under their fretwork canopies, with their hands crossed over their breasts and their heads covered with their caps of state, and reposing on pillows, lie on each side of the altar. On the platform before the church, as you ascend the steps from your gondola, is a colossal statue of a Contarini who defeated the Genoese. It is a small church, built and endowed by the family. Masses are there to this day sung for their souls.

One sunshiny afternoon I entered this church, and repaired, as was my custom, to the altar, which, with its tombs, was partially screened from the body of the building, being lighted by the large window in front, which considerably overtopped the screen. They were singing a mass in the nave, and I placed myself at the extreme side of the altar, in the shade of one of the tombs, and gazed upon the other. The sun was nearly setting; the opposite tomb was bathed with the soft, warm light which streamed in from the

window. I remained watching the placid and heroic countenance of the old Doge, the sunlight playing on it till it seemed to smile. The melodious voices of the choir, praying for Contarini, came flowing along the roof with so much sentiment and sweetness that I was soon wrapped in self-oblivion; and although my eye was apparently fixed upon the tomb, my mind wandered in delightful abstraction.

A temporary cessation of the music called me to myself. I looked around, and, to my surprise, I beheld a female figure kneeling before the altar. At this moment the music recommenced. She evidently did not observe me. She threw over her shoulders the black veil, with which her face had hitherto been covered. Her eyes were fixed upon the ground, her hands raised, and pressed together in prayer. I had never beheld so beautiful a being. She was very young, and her countenance perfectly fair, but without colour, or tinted only with the transient flush of devotion. Her features were delicate, yet sharply defined. I could mark her long eyelashes touching her cheek; and her dark hair, parted on her white brow, fell on each side of her face in tresses of uncommon length and lustre. Altogether she was what I had sometimes fancied as the ideal of Venetian beauty. As I watched her, her invocation ceased, and she raised her large dark eyes with an expression of melancholy that I never shall forget.

And as I gazed upon her, instead of feeling agitated and excited, a heaviness crept over my frame, and a drowsiness stole over my senses. Enraptured by her presence, anxiously desirous to ascertain who she might be, I felt, to my consternation, each moment more difficulty in moving, even in seeing. The

tombs, the altar, the kneeling suppliant, moved confusedly together and mingled into mist, and sinking back on the tomb which supported me, I fell, as I supposed, into a deep slumber.

I dreamed that a long line of Venetian nobles, two by two, passed before me, and as they passed, they saluted me; and the two doges were there, and as they went by they smiled and waved their bonnets. And suddenly there appeared my father alone, and he was dressed in a northern dress, the hunting-dress I wore in the forest of Jonsterna, and he stopped and looked upon me with great severity, and I withdrew my eye, for I could not bear his glance, and when I looked up again he was not there, but the lady of the altar. She stood before me, clinging to a large crucifix, a large crucifix of ebony, the same that I had beheld in the chapel in the gardens on the Brenta. The tears hung quivering on her agitated face. I would have rushed forward to console her, but I awoke.

I awoke, looked round, and remembered everything. She was not there. It was twilight, and the tombs were barely perceptible. All was silent. I stepped forth from the altar into the body of the church, where a single acolyte was folding up the surplices and placing them in a trunk. I inquired if he had seen any lady go out; but he had seen nothing. He stared at my puzzled look, which was the look of a man roused from a vivid dream. I went forth; one of my gondoliers was lying on the steps. I asked him also if he had seen any lady go out. He assured me that no person had come forth, except the priests. Was there any other way? They believed not. I endeavoured to re-enter the church to examine, but it was locked.

CHAPTER VIII.

Was It a Dream?

IF EVER the science of metaphysics ceases to be a frivolous assemblage of unmeaning phrases, and we attempt to acquire that knowledge of our nature which is, doubtless, open to us, by the assistance of facts instead of words; if ever, in short, the philosophy of the human mind shall be based on demonstration instead of dogma, the strange incident just related will, perhaps, not be considered the wild delusion of a crack-brained visionary. For myself, I have no doubt that the effect produced upon me by the lady in the church was a magnetic influence, and that the slumber, which at the moment occasioned me so much annoyance and so much astonishment, was nothing less than a luminous trance.

I knew nothing of these high matters then, and I returned to my palace in a state of absolute confusion. It was so reasonable to believe that I had fallen asleep, and that the whole was a dream. Everything was thus satisfactorily accounted for. Nevertheless, I could not overcome my strong conviction that the slumber, which I could not deny, was only a secondary inci-

dent, and that I had positively, really, absolutely, beheld kneeling before the altar that identical and transcendent form which, in my dream or vision, I had marked clinging to the cross.

I examined the gondoliers on my return home, but elicited nothing. I examined myself the whole evening, and resolved that I had absolutely seen her. I attended at the church the next day; but nothing occurred. I spoke to the priests, and engaged one to keep a constant observation; still nothing ever transpired.

The Villeggiatura was over; the great families returned; the carnival commenced; Venice was full and gay. There were assemblies every evening. The news that a young foreign nobleman had come to reside at Venice, of course, quickly spread. My establishment, my quality, and, above all, my name, insured me an hospitable reception, although I knew not a single individual, and, of course, had not a single letter. I did not encourage their attentions, and went nowhere, except to the opera, which opened with the carnival. I have a passion for instrumental music, but I admire little the human voice, which appears to me, with all our exertions, a poor instrument. Sense and sentiment, too, are always sacrificed to dexterity and caprice. A grand orchestra fills my mind with ideas; I forget everything in the stream of invention. A prima donna is very ravishing; but while I listen I am a mere man of the world, or hardly sufficiently well bred to conceal my weariness.

The effect of music upon the faculty of invention is a subject on which I have long curiously observed and deeply meditated. It is a finer prelude to creation than to execution. It is well to meditate upon a

subject under the influence of music, but to execute we should be alone, and supported only by our essential and internal strength. Were I writing, music would produce the same effect upon me as wine. I should for a moment feel an unnatural energy and fire, but, in a few minutes, I should discover that I shadowed forth only phantoms; my power of expression would die away, and my pen would fall upon the insipid and lifeless page. The greatest advantage that a writer can derive from music is, that it teaches most exquisitely the art of development. It is in remarking the varying recurrence of a great composer to the same theme, that a poet may learn how to dwell upon the phases of a passion, how to exhibit a mood of mind under all its alternations, and gradually to pour forth the full tide of feeling.

The last week of the carnival arrived, in which they attempt to compress all the frolic that should be diffused over the rest of the forty days, which, it must be confessed, are dull enough. At Venice the beauty and the wildness of the carnival still linger. St. Mark's Place was crowded with masks. It was even more humourous to observe these grotesque forms in repose than in action; to watch a monster, with a nose a foot long and asses' ears, eating an ice; or a mysterious being, with a face like a dolphin, refreshing herself with a fan as huge as a parasol. The houses were clothed with carpets and tapestry; every place was illuminated, and everybody pelted with sweetmeats and sugar-plums. No one ever seemed to go to bed; the water was covered with gondolas, and everybody strummed a guitar.

During the last nights of the carnival it is the practice to convert the opera house into a ball-room,

and, on these occasions, the highest orders are masked. The scene is very gay and amusing. In some boxes, a supper is always ready, at which all guests are welcome. But masked you must be. It is even strict etiquette on these occasions for ladies to ramble about the theatre unattended, and the great diversion of course is the extreme piquancy of the incognito conversations; since, in a limited circle, in which few are unknown to each other, it is not difficult to impregnate this slight parley with a sufficient quantity of Venetian salt.

I went to one of these balls, as I thought something amusing might occur. I went in a domino, and was careful not to enter my box, lest I should be discovered. As I was sauntering along one of the rooms near the stage, a female mask saluted me.

'We did not expect you,' she said.

'I only came to meet you,' I replied.

'You are more gallant than we supposed you to be.'

'The world is seldom charitable,' I said.

'They say you are in love.'

'You are the last person to consider that wonderful.'

'Really quite chivalric. Why! they said you are quite a wild man.'

'But you, Signora, have tamed me.'

'But do you know they say you are in love?'

'Well, doubtless with a charming person.'

'Oh! yes, a very charming person. Do you know they say you are Count Narcissus, and in love with yourself?'

'Do they indeed! They seem to say vastly agreeable things, I think. Very witty, upon my honour.'

'Oh! very witty, no doubt of that, and you should be a judge of wit, you know, because you are a poet.'

'You seem to know me well.'

'I think I do. You are the young gentleman, are you not, who has quarrelled with his papa?'

'That is a very vague description.'

'I can give you some further details.'

'Pray spare me and yourself.'

'Do you know I have written your character?'

'Indeed! It is doubtless as accurate as most others.'

'Oh! it is founded upon the best authorities. There is only one part imperfect. I wish to give an account of your works. Will you give me a list?'

'I must have an equivalent, and something more interesting than my own character.'

'Meet me to-night at the Countess Malbrizzi's.'

'I cannot, I do not know her.'

'Do not you know that, in carnival time, a mask may enter any house? After the ball, all will be there. Will you meet me? I am now engaged.'

This seemed the opening of an adventure, which youth is not inclined to shun. I assented, and the mask glided away, leaving me in great confusion and amazement, at her evident familiarity with my history.

CHAPTER IX.

The Mysterious Mask.

I ARRIVED at the steps of the Malbrizzi Palace amid a crowd of gondolas. I ascended without any announcement into the saloons, which were full of guests. I found, to my great annoyance, that I was the only mask present. I felt that I had been fairly taken in, and perceiving that I was an object of universal attention, I had a great inclination to make a precipitate retreat. But, on reflection, I determined to take a rapid survey before my departure, and then retire with dignity. Leaning against a pillar, I flattered myself that I appeared quite at my ease.

A lady, whom I had already conjectured to be the mistress of the mansion, advanced and addressed me. Time had not yet flown away with her charms.

'Signor Mask,' she said, 'ever welcome, and doubly welcome, if a friend.'

'I fear I have no title to admission within these walls, except the privilege of the season.'

'I should have thought otherwise,' said the lady, 'if you be one for whom many have inquired.'

'You must mistake me for another. It is not probable that any one would inquire after *me.*'

'Shall I tell you your name?'

'Some one has pretended to give me that unnecessary information already to-night.'

'Well! I will not betray you, but I am silent in the hope that you will, ere midnight, reward me for my discretion by rendering it unnecessary. We trust that the ice of the north will melt beneath our Venetian sun. You understand me?' So saying, she glided away.

I could not doubt that this lady was the Countess Malbrizzi, and that she was the female mask who had addressed me in the opera house. She evidently knew me. I had not long to seek for the source whence she attained this knowledge. The son of the Austrian Minister at our court, and who had himself been attached to the legation, passed by me. His uncle was governor of Venice. Everything was explained.

I moved away, intending to retire. A group in the room I entered attracted my attention. Several men were standing round a lady, apparently entreating her, with the usual compliments and gesticulations, to play upon the guitar. Her face was concealed from me; one of her suite turned aside, and, notwithstanding the difference of her rich dress, I instantly recognised the kneeling lady of the church. I was extremely agitated. I felt the inexplicable sensation that I had experienced on the tomb, and was fearful that it might end in as mortifying a catastrophe. I struggled against the feeling, and struggled successfully. As I thus wrestled with my mind, I could not refrain from gazing intently upon the cause of my emotion. I felt an overwhelming desire to ascertain who she might be. I could not take my eyes from her. She impressed me with so deep an interest, that I entirely forgot

that other human beings were present. It was fortunate that I was masked, otherwise my fixed stare must have excited great curiosity.

As I stood thus gazing upon her, and as each moment her image seemed more vividly impressed upon my brain, a chain round her neck snapped in twain, and a diamond cross suspended to it fell to the floor. The surrounding cavaliers were instantly busied in seeking for the fallen jewel. I beheld, for the first time, her tall and complete figure. Our eyes met, and to my astonishment, she suddenly grew pale, ceased conversing, trembled, and sank into a chair. A gentleman handed her the cross; she received it, her colour returned, a smile played upon her features, and she rose from her seat.

The Countess passed me. I saluted her. 'I now wish you to tell me,' I said, 'not my own name, but the name of another person. Will you be kind?'

'Speak.'

'That lady,' I said, pointing to the group, 'I have a great wish to know who that lady may be.'

'Indeed!' said the Countess, 'I have a great wish also that your curiosity should be gratified. That is Signora Alcesté Contarini.'

'Contarini!' I exclaimed; 'how wonderful! I mean to say how singular, that is, I did not know——'

'That there were any other Contarinis but your Excellency, I suppose.'

'It is idle to wear this disguise,' I said, taking off my mask, and letting my domino slip to the floor. 'I have ever heard that it was impossible to escape the penetration of the Countess Malbrizzi.'

'My penetration has not been much exercised to-night, Count; but I assure you I feel gratified to have

been the means of inducing you to enter a society of which the Baroness Fleming was once the brightest ornament. Your mother was my friend.'

'You have, indeed, the strongest claim, then, to the respect of her son. But this young lady——'

'Is your cousin, an orphan, and the last of the Contarinis. You should become acquainted. Permit me to present you.' I accompanied her. 'Alcesté, my love,' continued the Countess, 'those should not be unknown to each other whom nature has intended to be friends. Your cousin, Count Contarini Fleming, claims your acquaintance.'

'I have not so many relations that I know not how to value them,' said Alcesté, as she extended to me her hand. The surrounding gentlemen moved away, and we were left alone. 'I arrived so unexpectedly in Venice,' I said, 'that I owe to a chance my introduction to one, whose acquaintance I should have claimed in a more formal manner.'

'You are then merely a passing visitor? We heard that it was your intention to become a resident.'

'I have become one. It has been too difficult for me to gain this long-desired haven again to quit it without a strong cause. But when I departed from my country, it was for the understood purpose of making a different course. My father is not so violent a Venetian as myself, and, for aught I know, conceives me to be now in France or England. In short, I have played truant, but I hope you will pardon me.'

'To love Venice is with me so great a virtue,' she replied, with a smile, 'that I fear, instead of feeling all the impropriety of your conduct, I sympathise too much with this violation of duty.'

'Of course, you could not know my father; but you may have heard of him. It has always been to me a source of deep regret that he did not maintain his connection with my mother's family. I inherit something even more Venetian than her name. But the past is too painful for my father to love to recall it. My mother, you know——'

'I am an orphan, and can feel all your misfortune. I think our house is doomed.'

'I cannot think so when I see you.'

She faintly smiled, but her features settled again into an expression of deep melancholy, that reminded me of her countenance in the church.

'I think,' I observed, 'this is not the first time I have had the pleasure of seeing you.'

'Indeed! I am not aware of our having before met.'

'I may be wrong; and I dare say you will think me very strange. But I cannot believe it was a dream, though certainly I was—— But really it is too ridiculous. You know the church where are the tombs of our family?'

'Yes!' Her voice was low, but quick. I fancied she was not quite at ease.

'Well, I cannot help believing that we were once together before that altar.'

'Indeed! I have returned to Venice a week. I have not visited the church since we came back.'

'Oh! this must have been a month ago. It certainly is very strange. I suppose it *must* have been a dream; I have sometimes odd dreams, and yet it is in consequence of that supposed meeting in the church that I recognised you this evening, and immediately sought an introduction.'

'I know the church well. To me, I may say to us,' she added, with a gentle inclination of the head, 'it is, of course, a very interesting spot.'

'I am entirely Venetian, and have no thought for any other country. This is not a new sentiment excited by the genius of the place; it was as strong amid the forests and snows of the north; as strong, I may truly say, when a child, as at this moment, when I would peril my life and fortunes in her service.'

'You are, indeed, enthusiastic. Alas! enthusiasm is little considered here. We are, at least, still lighthearted; but what cause we have for gaiety the smilers perhaps know; it is my misfortune not to be one of them. And yet resignation is all that is left us, and——'

'And what?' I asked, for she hesitated.

'Nothing,' she replied, 'nothing. I believe I was going to add, "it is better to forget."'

'Never! The recollection of the past is still glory. Rather would I be a Contarini amid our falling palaces than the mightiest noble of the most flourishing of modern empires.'

'What will your father say to such romance?'

'I have no father. I have no friend, no relation in the world, except yourself. I have disclaimed my parentage, my country, my allotted career, and all their rights, and honours, and privileges, and fame, and fortune. I have at least sacrificed all these for Venice; for, trifling as the circumstance may be, I can assure you that, merely to find myself a visitant of this enchanting city, I have thrown to the winds all the duties and connections of my past existence.'

'But why bind your lot to the fallen and the irre-

deemable? I have no choice but to die where I was born, and no wish to quit a country from which spring all my associations; but you, you have a real country, full of real interests, to engage your affections and exercise your duties. In the north, you are a man; your career may be active, intelligent, and useful; but the life of a Venetian is a dream, and you must pass your days like a ghost gliding about a city fading in a vision.'

'It is this very character that interests me. I have no sympathy with reality. What vanity in all the empty bustle of common life! It brings to me no gratification; on the contrary, degrading annoyance. It develops all the lowering attributes of my nature. In the world, I am never happy but in solitude; and in solitude so beautiful and so peculiar as that of Venice my days are indeed a dream, but a dream of long delight. I gaze upon the beautiful, and my mind responds to the inspiration, for my thoughts are as lovely as my visions.'

'Your imagination supports you. It is a choice gift. I feel too keenly my reality.'

'I cannot imagine that you, at least, should either feel or give rise to any other feelings but those that are enchanting.'

'Nay! a truce to compliments. Let me hear something worthier from you.'

'Indeed,' I said seriously, 'I was not thinking of compliments, nor am I in a mood for such frivolities; yet I wish not to conceal that, in meeting you this evening, I have experienced the most gratifying incident of my life.'

'I am happy to have met you, if, indeed, it be possible to be happy about anything.'

'Dear Alcesté, may I call you Alcesté? why should so fair a brow be clouded?'

'It is not unusually gloomy; my heaven is never serene. But see! the rooms are nearly empty, and I am waited for.'

'But we shall soon meet again?'

'I shall be here to-morrow. I reside with my maternal uncle, Count Delfini. I go out very little, but to-morrow I shall certainly be here.'

'I shall not exist until we meet again. I entreat you fail not.'

'Oh! I shall certainly be here; and in the meantime, you know,' she added, with a smile, 'you can dream.'

'Farewell, dear Alcesté! You cannot imagine how it pains me to part!'

'Adieu! shall I say Contarini?'

CHAPTER X.

Unwelcome News.

TO SAY that I was in love, that I was in love at first sight, these are weak, worldly phrases to describe the profound and absorbing passion that filled my whole being. There was a mystical fulfilment in our meeting, the consciousness of which mingled with my adoration, and rendered it quite supernatural. This was the Adrian bride that I had come to greet; this was the great and worthy object of so many strange desires, and bewildering dreams, and dark coincidences. I returned to my palace, threw myself into a chair, and sat for hours in mute abstraction. At last the broad light of morning broke into the chamber: I looked up, glanced round at the ghastly chandeliers, thought of the coming eve, and retired.

In the evening I hurried to the opera, but did not see Alcesté. I entered the box of the Countess. A young man rose as I entered, and retired. 'You see,' I said, 'your magic has in a moment converted me into a man of the world.'

'I am not the enchantress,' said the Countess, 'although I willingly believe you to be enchanted.'

'What an agreeable assembly you introduced me to last night!'

'I hope that I shall find you a constant guest.'

'I fear that you will find me too faithful a votary. I little imagined in the morning that I could lay claim to relationship with so interesting a person as your charming young friend.'

'Alcesté is a great favourite of mine.'

'She is not here, I believe, to-night?'

'I think not: Count Delfini's box is opposite, and empty.'

'Count Delfini is, I believe, some connection?——'

'Her uncle. They will soon be, as you are perhaps aware, nearer connected.'

'Indeed!' I said.

'You know that Alcesté is betrothed to his son, Count Grimani. By-the-bye, he quitted the box as you entered. You know him?'

I sank back in my chair, and turned pale.

'Do you admire this opera?' I inquired.

'It is a pretty imitation.'

'Very pretty.'

'We shall soon change it. They have an excellent opera at St. Petersburg, I understand. You have been there?'

'Yes. No. I understand very excellent. This house is hot.' I rose, bowed, and abruptly departed.

I instantly quitted the theatre, covered myself up in my cloak, threw myself down in my gondola, and groaned. In a few minutes I reached home, where I was quite unexpected. I ran up stairs. Lausanne was about to light the candles, but I sent him away. I was alone in the large dark chamber, which seemed only more vast and gloomy for the bright moon.

'Thank God!' I exclaimed, 'I am alone. Why do I not die? Betrothed! It is false! she cannot be another's! She is mine! she is my Adrian bride! Destiny has delivered her to me. Why did I pass the Alps? Heaven frowned upon my passage; yet I was expected; I was long expected. Poh! she *is* mine. I would cut her out from the heart of a legion. Is she happy? Her "heaven is never serene." Mark that. I will be the luminary to dispel these clouds. Betrothed! Infamous jargon! She belongs to me. Why did I not stab him? Is there no bravo in Venice that will do the job? Betrothed! What a word! What an infamous, what a ridiculous word! She is mine, and she is betrothed to another! Most assuredly, if she be only to be attained by the destruction of the city, she shall be mine. A host of Delfinis shall not balk me!

'Now this is no common affair. It shall be done, and it shall be done quickly. I cannot doubt she loves me. It is as necessary that she should love me as that I should adore her. We are bound together by Fate. We belong to each other: "I have been long expected."

'Ah! were these words a warning or a prophecy? Have I arrived too late? Let it be settled at once, this very evening. Suspense is madness. She is mine! most assuredly she is mine! I will not admit for a moment that she is not mine. That idea cannot exist in my thoughts; it is the end of the world, it is Doomsday for me. Most assuredly she is my Adrian bride, my *bride*, not my *betrothed* merely, but my *bride*.

'Let me be calm. I am calm. I never was calmer in my life. Nothing shall ruffle, nothing shall dis-

compose me. I will have my rights. This difficulty will make our future lives more sweet; we shall smile at it in each other's arms. Grimani Delfini! if there be blood in that name, it shall flow. Rather than another should possess her, she shall herself be sacrificed! a solemn sacrifice, a sweet and solemn sacrifice, consecrated by my own doom! I would lead her to the altar like Iphigenia. I ——

'O inscrutable, inexorable Destiny, which must be fulfilled! doom that mortals must endure, and cannot direct! Lo! I kneel before thee, and I pray. Let it end! let it end! let it end at once! This suspense is insanity. Is she not mine? Didst thou not whisper it in the solitude of the north? didst thou not confirm it amid the thunder of the Alps? didst thou not reanimate my drooping courage even amid this fair city, which I so much love, this land of long and frequent promise? And shall it not be? Do I exist? do I breathe, and think, and dare? Am I a man, and a man of strong passions and deep thoughts? and shall I, like a vile beggar, upon my knees, crave the rich heritage that is my own by right? If she be not mine, there is no longer Venice, no longer human existence, no longer a beautiful and everlasting world. Let it all cease; let the whole globe crack and shiver; let all nations and all human hopes expire at once; let chaos come again, if this girl be not my bride!'

I determined to go to the Malbrizzi Palace. My spirit rose as I ascended the stairs. I felt confident she was there. Her form was the first that occurred to me as I entered the saloon. Several persons were around her, and among them Girmani Delfini. I did not care. I had none of the jealousy of petty loves. She was unhappy, that was sufficient; and, if there

were no other way of disentangling the mesh, I had a sword that should cut this Gordian knot in his best blood. I saluted her. She presented me to her cousin, and I smiled upon one who, at all events, should be my victim.

'I hope we shall make Venice agreeable to you, Count,' said Grimani.

'There is no doubt,' I replied.

We conversed for some time on indifferent subjects. My manner was elated, and I entered into the sparkling contest of conversation with success. The presence of Alcesté was my inspiration. I would not quit her side, and in time we were once more alone.

'You are ever gay,' she remarked.

'My face is most joyful when my heart is most gloomy. Happiness is tranquil. Why were you not at the opera?'

'I go out very little.'

'I went thither only to meet you. I detest those assemblies. You are always surrounded by a crowd of moths. Will you dance?'

'I have just refused Grimani.'

'I am glad of it. I abhor dancing; and I only asked you to monopolise your society.'

'And what have you been doing to-day? Have you seen all our spectacles?'

'I have just risen. I did not go to bed last night; but sat up musing over our strange meeting.'

'Was it so strange?'

'It was stranger than you imagine.'

'You are mysterious.'

'Everything is mysterious, although I have been always taught the reverse.'

'I believe, too,' she remarked, with a pensive air, and in a serious tone, 'that the courses of this world are not so obvious as we imagine.'

'The more I look upon you, the more I am convinced that yesterday was not our first meeting. We have been long acquainted.'

'In dreams?'

'What you please. Dreams, visions, prophecies; I believe in them all. You have often appeared to me, and I have often heard of you.'

'Dreams are doubtless very singular.'

'They come from Heaven. I could tell you stories of dreams that would indeed surprise you.'

'Tell me.'

'When I was about to pass the Alps —— but really it is too serious a narrative for such a place. Do you know the villa of the Temple on the Brenta?'

'Assuredly, for it is my own.'

'Your own! Then you are indeed mine.'

'What can you mean?'

'The temple, the temple! ——'

'And did you write upon the wall?'

'Who else? Who else? But why I wrote, that I would tell you.'

'Let us walk to the end of these rooms. There is a terrace, where we shall be less disturbed.'

'And where we have been long expected.'

'Ah!'

CHAPTER XI.

'Destiny Is Our Own Will.'

'IT IS wonderful, most wonderful!' and she leant down, and plucked a flower.

'I wish I were that flower!' I said.

'It resembles me more than you, Contarini,' and she threw it away.

'I see no resemblance.'

'It is lost.'

I picked it up, and placed it near my heart.

'It is found,' I replied, 'and cherished.'

'We are melancholy,' said Alcesté, 'and yet we are not happy. Your philosophy, is it quite correct?'

'I am happy, and you should resemble me, because I wish it.'

'Good wishes do not always bring good fortunes.'

'Destiny bears to us our lot, and Destiny is perhaps our own will.'

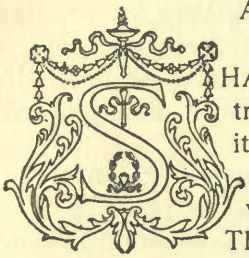
'Alas! my will is brighter than my doom!'

'Both should be beautiful, and shall——'

'Oh! talk not of the future. Come, Contarini, come, come away.'

CHAPTER XII.

A Mad Avowal.



HALL I endeavour to recall the soft transport which this night diffused itself over my being? I existed only for one object; one idea only was impressed upon my brain. The next day passed in a delicious listlessness and utter oblivion of all cares and duties. In the evening I rose from the couch, on which I had the whole day reclined musing on a single thought, and flew to ascertain whether that wizard, Imagination, had deceived me, whether she were, indeed, so wondrous fair and sweet, and that this earth could indeed be graced by such surpassing loveliness.

She was not there. I felt her absence as the greatest misfortune that had ever fallen upon me. I could not anticipate existing four-and-twenty hours without her presence, and I lingered in expectation of her arrival. I could hear nothing of her; but each moment I fancied she must appear. It seemed impossible that so bitter a doom awaited me, as that I should not gaze this night upon her beauty. She did not come. I remained to the last, silent and anxious, and returned home to a sleepless bed.

The next morning I called at the Delfini Palace, to which I had received an invitation. Morning was an unusual time to call, but for this I did not care. I saw the old Count and Countess, and her ladyship's cavalier, a frivolous and ancient Adonis. I talked with them all, all of them, with the greatest good humour, in the hope that Alcesté would at length appear. She did not. I ventured to inquire after her. I feared she might be unwell. She was quite well, but engaged with her confessor. I fell into one of my silent rages, kicked the old lady's poodle, snubbed the cavalier, and stalked away.

In the evening I was careful to be at the Malbrizzi Palace. The Delfinis were there, but not Alcesté. I was already full of suspicions, and had been brooding the whole morning over a conspiracy. 'Alcesté is not here,' I observed to the Countess, 'is she unwell?'

'Not at all. I saw her this morning. She was quite well. I suppose Count Grimani is jealous.'

'Hah!' thought I, 'has it already come to that? Let us begin, then. I feel desperate. This affair must be settled. Fed by her constant presence and her smiles, the flame of my passion could for a time burn with a calm and steady blaze; but I am getting mad again. I shall die if this state of things lasts another day. I have half a mind to invite him to the terrace, and settle it at once. Let me see, cannot I do more?'

I mused a moment, quitted the saloon, called the gondola and told them to row me to the Delfini Palace.

We glided beneath that ancient pile. All was dark, save one opened window, whence proceeded

the voice of one singing. I knew that voice. I motioned to the gondoliers to rest upon their oars.

'Tis the Signora Contarini,' whispered Tita, who was acquainted with the family.

We floated silently beneath her window. Again she sang.

'I MARKED A ROSE BEDEWED WITH TEARS, A WHITE AND VIRGIN ROSE; AND I SAID, "O! ROSE WHY DO YOU WEEP, YOU ARE TOO BEAUTIFUL FOR SORROW?" AND SHE ANSWERED, "LADY, MOURN NOT FOR ME, FOR MY GRIEF COMES FROM HEAVEN."'

She was silent. I motioned to Tita, who, like many of the gondoliers, was gifted with a fine voice, to answer. He immediately sang a verse from one of the favourite ballads of his city. While he sung I perceived her shadow, and presently I observed her in the middle of the apartment. I plucked from my breast a flower, which I had borne for her to the Malbrizzi Palace, and I threw the rose into the chamber.

It fell upon the table. She picked it up, she stared at it for some moments, she smiled, she pressed it to her lips.

I could restrain myself no longer. I pushed the gondola alongside the palace, clambered up the balcony, and entered the room.

She started, she nearly shrieked, but restrained herself.

'You are surprised, Alcesté, perhaps you are displeased. They are endeavouring to separate us; I cannot live without you.'

She clasped her hands, and looked up to heaven with a glance of anguish.

'Yes! Alcesté,' I exclaimed, advancing, 'let me express what my manner has never attempted to conceal, let me express to you my absolute adoration. I love you, my Alcesté; I love you with a passion as powerful as it is pure, a passion which I cannot control, a passion which ought not to be controlled.'

She spoke not, she turned away her head, and deprecated my advances with her extended arms.

'Alcesté, I know all. I know the empty, the impious ceremony, that has doomed you to be the bride of a being whom you must abhor. My Alcesté is not happy. She herself told me her heaven was not serene, the heaven in whose light I would for ever lie.'

I advanced, stole her hand, and pressed it to my lips. Her face was hidden in her arm, and that reclined upon a pillar.

There was silence for a moment. Suddenly she withdrew her hand, and said, in a low but distinct voice, 'Contarini, this must end.'

'End! Alcesté, I adore you. You, you dare not say you do not love me. Our will is not our own. Destiny has linked us together, and Heaven has interposed to consecrate our vows. And shall a form, a dull, infamous form, stand between our ardent and hallowed loves!'

'It is not that, Contarini, it is not that, though that were much. No, Contarini, I am not yours.'

'Not mine, Alcesté! not mine! Look upon me. Think who I am, and dare to say you are not mine. Am I not Contarini Fleming? Are you not my Adrian bride? Heaven has delivered you to me.'

'Alas! alas! Heaven keeps me from you.'

'Alcesté, you see kneeling before you one who is indeed nothing, if Fame be what some deem. I am

young, Alcesté; the shadow of my mind has not yet fallen over the earth. Yet there is that within me, and at this moment I prophesy, there is that within me, which may yet mould the mind and fortunes of my race; and of this heart capable of these things, the fountains are open, Alcesté, and they flow for you. Disdain them not, Alcesté, pass them not by with carelessness. In the desert of your life, they will refresh you, yes, yes, they can indeed become to you a source of all felicity.

'I love you with a love worthy of your being; I love you as none but men like me can love. Blend not the thought of my passion with the commonplace affections of the world. Is it nothing to be the divinity of that breathing shrine of inspiration, my teeming mind? O! Alcesté, you know not the world to which I can lead you, the fair and glorious garden, in which we may wander for ever.'

'I am lost!' she murmured.

I caught her in my arms; yea! I caught her in my arms, that dark-eyed daughter of the land I loved. I sealed her sweet lips with passionate kisses. Her head rested on my breast; and I dried with embraces her fast-flowing tears.

CHAPTER XIII.

Love Revealed.

I HAD quitted Alcesté so abruptly that I had made no arrangements for our future meeting. Nor, indeed, for some time could I think of anything but my present and overflowing joy. So passionately was I entranced with all that had happened; so deeply did I muse over all that had been said and done; so sweetly did her voice linger in my ear; and so clearly did her fond form move before my vision, that hours elapsed before I felt again the craving of again beholding her. I doubted not that I should find her at the Malbrizzi Palace. I was disappointed, but my disappointment was not bitter, like the preceding eve. I felt secure in our secret love, and I soon quitted the assembly again to glide under her window. All was dark; I waited. Tita again sang. No light appeared, no sound stirred.

I resolved to call at the palace, to which I had received the usual general invitation. The family were out and at the Pisani Palace. I returned to Madame Malbrizzi's, and looked about for my young Austrian acquaintance. I observed him; and we fell into con-

versation. I inquired if he knew Count Pisani, and on his answering in the affirmative, I requested him to accompany me to his residence. We soon arrived at the Pisani Palace. I met the Delfinis, but no Alcesté. I spoke to the Countess. I listened to several stories about her lapdog, I even anticipated her ancient cavalier in picking up her glove. I ventured to inquire after Alcesté. They believed she was not quite well. I quitted the palace, and repaired again to the magical window. Darkness and silence alone greeted me. I returned home, more gloomy than anxious.

In the morning Lausanne brought me a letter. I broke the seal with a trembling hand, and with a faint blush. I guessed the writer. The words seemed traced by love. I read:—

'I renounce our vows; I retract our sacred pledge; I deliver to the winds our fatal love.

'Pity me, Contarini, hate me, despise me, but forget me.

'Why do I write? Why do I weep? I am nothing, oh! I am nothing. I am blotted out of this fair creation; and the world, that should bring me so many joys, brings me only despair.

'Do not hate me, Contarini, do not hate me. Do not hate one who adores you. Yes! adores; for even at this dread moment, when I renounce your love, let me, let me pour forth my adoration.

'Am I insensible? am I unworthy of the felicity that for an instant we thought might be mine? O! Contarini, no one is worthy of you, and yet I fondly believed my devotion might compensate for my imperfectness.

'To be the faithful companion of his life, to be the partner of his joy and sorrow, to sympathise with his glory, and to solace his grief, I ask no more. Thou Heaven! wilt thou not smile upon me? Wilt thou, for whom I sacrificed so much, wilt thou not pity me?

'All is silent. There is no sign. No heavenly messenger tells me I may be happy. Alas! I ask too much. It is too great a prize. I feel it, I believe it. My unworthiness is great, but I am its victim.

'Contarini, let this console you. Heaven has declared I am unworthy of you. Were I worthy of you, Heaven would not be cruel. O, Contarini, let this console you. You are destined for higher joys. Think not of me, Contarini, think not of me, and I, I will be silent.

'Silent! And where? O world, which I now feel that I could love, beautiful, beautiful world, thou art not for me, and Heaven, Heaven to whom I offer so much, surely, in this agony, it will support me.

'I must write, although my pen refuses to inscribe my woe; I must write, although my fast-flowing tears bathe out the record of my misery. O my God, for one moment uphold me! Let the future at least purchase me one moment of present calm! Let me spare, at least, him! Let me, at least, in this last act of my love, testify my devotion by concealing my despair.

'You must know all, Contarini. You must know all, that you may not hate me. Think me not light, think me not capricious. It is my constancy that is fatal, it is my duty that is my death.

'You love our country, Contarini, you love our Italy. Fatal Italy! Fly, fly away from us. Cross again those Alps where Heaven frowned upon you as you passed. Unhappy country! I who was born to breathe amid thy beauty, am the victim of thy usages. You know the customs of this land. The convent is our school, it leads to the cloister, that is too often our doom. I was educated in a Tuscan convent. I purchased my release from it, like many of my friends, and the price was my happiness, which I knew not then how to prize. The day that I quitted the convent I was the betrothed bride of Grimani Delfini. I was not then terrified by that, the memory of which now makes me shudder. It is a common though an unhallowed incident.

'I entered that world of which I had thought so much. My mind expanded with my increased sphere of knowledge. Let me be brief. I soon could not contemplate without horror the idea of being the bride of a man I could not love. There was no refuge. I postponed our union by a thousand excuses; and had recourse to a thousand expedients to dissolve it. Vain struggling of a slave! In my frenzy, the very day that you entered Italy I returned to Florence on the excuse of visiting a friend, and secretly devoted myself to the cloister. The Abbess, allured by the prospect of acquiring my property for her institution, became my confidante, and I returned to Venice only to make in secret the necessary preparations for quitting it for ever.

'The Delfinis were on the Brenta. I repaired one day to the villa which you visited, and which, though uninhabited, became, from having been the favourite residence of my father, a frequent object of my visits. As I walked along the terrace, I perceived for a moment, and at a distance, a stranger crossing the lawn. I retired into the chapel, where I remained more than half an hour. I quitted the chapel and walked to the temple. I was attracted by some writing on the wall. I read it, and although I could ascribe to it no definite meaning, I could not help musing over it. I sat down in a chair at the head of the table. Whether I were tired by the walk or overpowered by the heat I know not, but an unaccustomed drowsiness crept over my limbs, and I fell asleep. I not only fell asleep, but I dreamed, and my dream was wonderful and strange.

'I found myself alone in the cloisters of a convent, and I heard afar the solemn chant of an advancing procession. It became louder and louder, and soon I perceived the nuns advancing with the Abbess at their head. And the Abbess came forward to claim me, and, to my horror, her countenance was that of Grimani Delfini. And I struggled to extricate myself from her grasp, and suddenly the stranger of the morning rushed in, and caught me in his arms, and the cloisters melted away, and I found myself in a beautiful country, and I awoke.

'The sun had set. I returned home, pensive and wayward. Never had I thought of my unhappy situation with more unhappiness. And each night the figure of the stranger appeared to me in my dreams, and each day I procrastinated my return to Florence. And in the agitation which these strange dreams produced, I determined to go and pray at the tombs of my fathers. I quitted the Villa Delfini with a single female attendant, and returned to it the same day. I entered the church through a private door from the adjoining building, which was a house of charity founded by our family.

'You know the rest, Contarini. We met. The stranger of my dreams stood before me. My heart, before that meeting, was already yours, and, when you whispered to me that you too——

'Woe! woe! why are we not happy! You said that heaven had brought us together. Alas! Contarini, heaven has parted us. I avoided you, Contarini. I flew from the spell which each instant grew stronger. You sought me. I yielded. Yes! I yielded, but long vigils shall atone for that fatal word.

'Go, Contarini, go forth in glory and in pride. I will pray for you, I will ever think of you; I will ever think of my best, my only beloved. All the prosperity human imagination can devise and heav-

enly love can grant, hover over you! You will be happy, you must be happy. For my sake you will be happy, and I, I am alone, but I am alone with my Redeemer. ALCESTÉ.'

It was read. My spirit was never more hushed in my life; I was quite calm. She might be in a convent, and it might be necessary to burn the convent down, and both of us might probably perish in the flames. But what was death to the threatened desolation? I sent for Lausanne. 'Lausanne,' I said, 'I have a high opinion of your talents and energy. I have hitherto refrained from putting them to the test for particular reasons. A circumstance has occurred in which I require not only their greatest exertion, but devotion and fidelity. If you accomplish my wish you are no longer my servant, you are my friend for life. If you fail, it matters little, for I shall not survive. But if you betray me, Lausanne——' and I looked through his very soul.

'The consequences may be fatal to me. I understand you. When I entered your service, you are under a mistake if you consider my fidelity restricted.'

'It is well; I place implicit trust in you. Signora Contarini has quitted Venice suddenly. Her present abode is a secret: I wish to ascertain it.'

'There will be no difficulty, my lord,' said Lausanne, with a smile. 'There are no secrets in Venice to the rich.'

'It is well. I shall remain in this room until I hear from you. I care not how much is expended. Away! and for God's sake, Lausanne, bring me good news.'

CHAPTER XIV.

Flight and Capture.

I WALKED up and down the room without stopping. Not an idea crossed my mind. In two hours Lausanne returned.

'Well?' I exclaimed.

'There is, I think, little doubt that the Signora departed for the Villa Delfini. She may now have quitted it. I sent Tita to the palace, as he is acquainted with the household. This is all he could elicit.'

'The gondola! Rest you here, Lausanne, and let me know when I return what ships are about to leave the port. Tell the banker I shall want money, a considerable sum; two thousand sequins; and let the bills be ready for my signature. And Lausanne,' I added in a low tone, 'I may require a priest. Have your eye upon some fellow who will run over the ceremony without asking questions. If I be any time absent say I am gone to Trieste.'

My gondoliers skimmed along. We were soon at Fusina. I shook my purse to the postilion. The horses were ready in an instant. I took Tita with me, as he knew the servants. We dashed off at a

rate which is seldom achieved on those dull sandy roads.

We hurried on for three or four hours. I told Tita to have his eye for any of the Delfini household. As we were passing the gate of the Villa of the Temple, he turned round on the box, and said, 'By the blood of the Holy Baptist, your Excellency, there is the little Maria, Signora Alcesté's attendant. She just now entered that side door. I knew her by the rose-coloured ribbons which I gave her last carnival.'

'Did she see us?'

'I think not, for the baggage would have smiled.'

'Drive back a hundred yards.'

It was sunset. I got out of the carriage, and stole into the gardens of the villa unperceived. I could see no lights in the building. From this I inferred that Alcesté was perhaps only paying a farewell visit to her father's house. I ran along the terrace, but observed no one. I gained the chapel, and instinctively trod very lightly. I glanced in at the window, and perceived a form kneeling before the altar. There was a single taper. The kneeling figure leant back with clasped hands. The light fell upon the countenance. I beheld the face of Alcesté Contarini.

I opened the door gently, but it roused her. I entered.

'I come,' I said, 'to claim my bride.'

She screamed; she leaped upon the altar, and clung to the great ebony cross. It was the same figure and the same attitude that I had beheld in my vision in the church.

'Alcesté,' I said, 'you are mine. There is no power in heaven or on earth, there is no infernal influence that can prevent you from being mine. You

are as much part of me as this arm with which I now embrace you.' I tore her from the cross; I carried her fainting form out of the chapel.

The moon had risen. I rested on a bank, and watched with blended passion and anxiety her closed eyes. She was motionless, and her white arms drooped down apparently without life. She breathed, yes! she breathed. That large eye opened and darkened into light. She gazed around with an air of vacancy. A smile, a faint, sweet smile, played upon her face. She slightly stretched her beautiful frame, as if again to feel her existence, and moved her beautiful arms, as if to try whether she yet retained power over her limbs. Again she smiled, and exclaiming, 'Contarini!' threw them round my neck.

'O, my Alcesté, my long-promised Alcesté, you are indeed mine.'

'I am yours, Contarini!'

CHAPTER XV.

My Adrian Bride.

E WALKED to the temple, in order that she might compose herself before her journey. I sat down in the same chair, but not alone. Happiness is indeed tranquil; for our joy was full, and we were silent. At length I whispered to her that we must go. We rose, and were about to leave the temple, when she would go back and press her lips on my inscription.

She remembered the maid, whom I had forgotten. I sent Tita to tell his friend that a carriage had arrived from Madame Malbrizzi's for Alcesté, who was obliged suddenly to return, and that she was to remain behind. I wrapped Alcesté in my cloak and placed her in the carriage, and then returned to Venice.

The gondola glided swiftly to my palace. I carried Alcesté out, and bore her to her apartment. She entreated that I would not quit her. I was obliged, therefore, to receive Lausanne's report at the door. There was no vessel immediately about to depart, but a ship had quitted the port that morning for Candia, and was still beating about in the offing. He had

himself seen the captain, who was content to take passengers, provided they would come out to him. This suited my plans. Lausanne had induced the captain to lie-to till the morning. A priest, he told me, was waiting.

I broke to Alcesté, lying exhausted upon the sofa, the necessity of our instant departure and our instant union. She said it was well; that she should never be at ease till she had quitted Venice; and that she was ready. I postponed our marriage until the night, and wished her to take some refreshment, but she could not eat. Directions were given to Lausanne to prepare for our instant departure. I resolved to take Tita with me, with whom I was well pleased.

I was anxious about the marriage, because, although I believed it invalid in a Catholic country without a dispensation, it would, as I conceived, hold good in Protestant law. I was careful of the honour of the Contarini, and at this moment was not unmindful of the long line of northern ancestry, of which I wished my child to be the heir.

The ingenuity of Lausanne was always remarkable at conjunctures like the present. The magic of his character was his patience. This made him quicker, and readier, and more successful than all other men. He prepared everything, and anticipated wants of which we could not think.

Two hours before midnight I was united by the forms of the Catholic church to Alcesté Contarini, the head of the most illustrious house in Europe. Two servants were the only witnesses of an act, to fulfil which she imagined herself perilling her eternal welfare, and which exercised a more certain and injurious influence over her worldly fortunes and reputation.

At daybreak Lausanne roused me, saying that the wind was favourable, and we must be off. He had already despatched Tita to the ship with all our baggage. I rose, wrote to my banker, informing him that I should be absent some time, and requesting him to manage everything for my credit, and then I kissed my still sleeping wife. The morning light fell upon her soft face. A slight flush melted away as I gazed upon her, and she opened her eyes, and smiled. Never had she looked more beautiful. I would have given half my fortune to have been permitted to remain at Venice in tranquility and peace.

But doubly sweet is the love that is gained by danger and guarded by secrecy. All was prepared. We stepped, perhaps for the last time, into a gondola. The grey sea was before us; we soon reached the ship. Tita and the captain were standing at the ladder-head. The moment that we embarked the sails were set, and a dashing breeze bore us along out of the gulf. Long ere noon that Venice, with its towers and cupolas, which I had forfeited so much to visit, and all those pleasant palaces wherein I could have lived forever, had faded into the blue horizon.

CHAPTER XVI.

At Candia.

THE ship was an imperial merchant brig. The wife of the captain was on board; a great convenience for Alcesté, who was without female attendance, and, with the exception of some clothes which the provident Lausanne had obtained from Tita's sister, without a wardrobe. But these are light hardships for love, and the wind was favourable, and the vessel fleet. We were excellent sailors, and bore the voyage without inconvenience; and the novelty of the scene and the beauty of the sea amused and interested us.

I imbibed from this voyage a taste for a sea life, which future wanderings on the waters have only confirmed. I never find the sea monotonous. The variations of weather, the ingenious tactics, the rich sunsets, the huge, strange fish, the casual meetings, and the original and racy character of mariners, and perhaps also the frequent sight of land which offers itself in the Mediterranean, afford me constant amusement. I do not think that there is in the world a

kinder-hearted and more courteous person than a common sailor. As to their attentions to Alcesté, they were even delicate; and I am sure that, although a passionate lover, I might have taken many a hint from their vigilant solicitude. Whenever she was present their boisterous mirth was instantly repressed. She never walked the deck that a ready hand was not quick in clearing her path of any impediments, and ere I could even discover that she was weary, their watchful eyes anticipated her wants, and they proffered her a rude but welcome seat. Ah! what a charming voyage was this, when my only occupation was to look upon an ever-beaming face, and to be assured a thousand times each hour that I was the cause of all this happiness!

Lausanne called me one morning on deck. Our port was in sight. I ran up; I beheld the highlands of Candia; a rich, wild group of lofty blue mountains, and, in the centre, the snowy peak of Mount Ida. As we approached, the plain extending from the base of the mountains to the coast became perceptible, and soon a town and harbour.

We were surrounded by boats full of beings in bright and strange costumes. A new world, a new language, a new religion, were before us. Our deck was covered with bearded and turbaned men. We stared at each other in all this picturesque confusion; but Lausanne, and especially Tita, who spoke Greek and knew Candia well, saved us from all anxiety. We landed, and, thanks to being in a Turkish province, there was no difficulty about passports, with which we were unprovided, and a few sequins saved the captain from explaining why his passengers were not included in his ship's papers. We landed, and

were lodged in the house of a Greek, who officiated as a European vice-consul.

The late extraordinary incidents of our lives had followed each other with such rapidity that, when we woke in the morning, we could scarcely believe that it was not all a dream. We looked round our chamber with its strange furniture, and stared at the divans, and small, high windows, shadowed with painted glass, and smiled. Our room was darkened, but at the end opened an arch bright in the sun. Beautiful strange plants quivered in the light. The perfume of orange-trees filled our chamber, and the bees were clustering in the scarlet flowers of the pomegranate. Amid the pleasing distraction of these sweet sounds and scents we distinguished the fall of a fountain.

We stole forward to the arch, like a prince and princess just disenchanted in a fairy tale. We stepped into a court paved with marble, and full of rare shrubs. The fountain was in the centre. Around it were delicate mats of Barbary, and small bright Persian carpets; and, crouching on a scarlet cushion, was a white gazelle.

I stepped out, and found our kind host, who spoke Italian. I sent his lovely daughter, Alexina, whose cheeks were like a cleft pomegranate, to my wife. As for myself, by Lausanne's advice, I took a Turkish bath, which is the most delightful thing in the world; and when I was reduced to a jelly, I repaired to our host's divan, where his wife and three other daughters, all equally beautiful, and dressed in long flowing robes of different-coloured velvets, richly embroidered, and caps of the same material, with tassels of gold, and covered with pearls, came forward. One gave me a pipe seven feet long; another fed me with sweet-

meats; a third pressed her hand to her heart as she presented me coffee in a small cup of porcelain resting in a filagree frame; and a child, who sparkled like a fairy, bent her knee as she proffered me a vase of sherbet. I felt like a pasha, and the good father translated my compliments.

I thought that Alcesté would never appear, and I sent Lausanne to her door fifty times. At length she came, and in a Greek dress, which they had insisted upon her wearing. I thought I had never even dreamed of anything so beautiful. She smiled and blushed a little. We agreed that we were perfectly happy.

This was all very delightful, but it was necessary to arrange our plans. I consulted Lausanne. I wished to engage a residence in a retired part of the island. Our host had a country-house which would exactly suit us, and desired a tenant. I sent Lausanne immediately to examine it. It was only fifteen miles away. His report was satisfactory, and I at once closed with the consul's offer.

The house was a long low building, in the Eastern style, with plenty of rooms. It was situate on a gentle green hill, the last undulation of a chain of Mount Ida, and was completely embowered in gardens and plantations of olive and orange. It was about two miles from the sea, which appeared before us in a wild and rocky bay. A peasant who cultivated the gardens, with his wife and children, two daughters just breaking into womanhood and a young son, were offered to us as servants. Nothing could be more convenient. Behold us at length at rest.

CHAPTER XVII.

'The Isles of Greece.'

I HAVE arrived at a period of my life which, although it afforded me the highest happiness that was ever the lot of man, of which the recollection is now my never-ceasing solace, and to enjoy the memory of which is alone worth existence, cannot prove very interesting to those who have been sufficiently engaged by my history to follow me to my retirement in ancient Crete.

My life was now monotonous, for my life was only love.

I know not the palling of passion of which some write. I have loved only once, and the recollection of the being to whom I was devoted fills me at this moment with as much rapture as when her virgin charms were first yielded to my embrace. I cannot comprehend the sneers of witty rakes at what they call constancy. If beings are united by any other consideration than love, constancy is of course impossible, and, I think, unnecessary. To a man who is in love, the thought of another woman is uninteresting, if not repulsive. Constancy is human nature.

Instead of love being the occasion of all the misery of this world, as is sung by fantastic bards, I believe that the misery of this world is occasioned by there not being love enough. This opinion, at any rate, appears more logical. Happiness is only to be found in a recurrence to the principles of human nature, and these will prompt very simple manners. For myself, I believe that permanent unions of the sexes should be early encouraged; nor do I conceive that general happiness can ever flourish but in societies where it is the custom for all males to marry at eighteen. This custom, I am informed, is not unusual in the United States of America, and its consequence is a simplicity of manners and a purity of conduct which Europeans cannot comprehend, but to which they must ultimately have recourse. Primeval barbarism and extreme civilisation must arrive at the same results. Men, under these circumstances, are actuated by their structure; in the first instance, instinctively; in the second, philosophically. At present, we are all in the various gradations of the intermediate state of corruption.

I could have lived with Alcesté Contarini in a solitude for ever. I desired nothing more than to enjoy existence with such a companion. I would have communicated to her all my thoughts and feelings. I would have devoted to her solitary ear the poetry of my being. Such a life might not suit others. Others, influenced by a passion not less ardent, may find its flame fed by the cares of life, cherished by its duties and its pleasures, and flourishing amid the travails of society. All is an affair of organisation. Ours would differ. Among all men there are some points of similarity and sympathy. There are few alike; there are

some totally unlike the mass. The various tribes that people this globe, in all probability, spring from different animals. Until we know more of ourselves, of what use are our systems? For myself, I can conceive nothing more idle or more useless than what is styled moral philosophy. We speculate upon the character of man; we divide and we subdivide; we have our generals, our sages, our statesmen. There is not a modification of mind that is not mapped in our great atlas of intelligence. We cannot be wrong, because we have studied the past; and we are famous for discovering the future when it has taken place. Napoleon is First Consul, and would found a dynasty. There is no doubt of it. Read my character of Cromwell. But what use is the discovery, when the consul is already tearing off his republican robe, and snatching the imperial diadem? And suppose, which has happened, and may and will happen again; suppose a being of a different organisation from Napoleon or Cromwell placed in the same situation; a being gifted with a combination of intelligence hitherto unknown; where, then, is our moral philosophy, our nice study of human nature? How are we to speculate upon results which are to be produced by unknown causes? What we want is to discover the character of a man at his birth, and found his education upon his nature. The whole system of moral philosophy is a delusion, fit only for the play of sophists in an age of physiological ignorance.

I leave these great speculations for the dreariness of future hours. Alcesté calls me to the golden sands, whither it is our wont to take our sunset walk.

A Grecian sunset! The sky is like the neck of a dove; the rocks and waters are bathed with a violet

light. Each moment it changes; each moment it shifts into more graceful and more gleaming shadows. And the thin white moon is above all: the thin white moon, followed by a single star, like a lady by a page.

CHAPTER XVIII.

True Happiness.

WE HAD no books, no single source of amusement but our own society; and yet the day always appeared a moment. I did, indeed, contrive to obtain for Alcesté what was called a mandolin, and which, from its appearance, might have been an ancient lyre. But it was quite unnecessary. My tongue never stopped the whole day. I told Alcesté everything: all about my youthful scrapes and fancies, and Musæus and my battle, and Winter, and Christiana, and the confounded tragedy, and, of course, 'Manstein.' If I ceased for a moment, she always said, 'Go on.' On I went, and told the same stories over again, which she reheard with the same interest. The present was so delightful to me that I cared little to talk about the past, and always avoided the future. But Alcesté would sometimes turn the conversation to what might happen; and, as she now promised to heighten our happiness by bringing us a beautiful stranger to share our delightful existence, the future began to interest even me.

I had never written to my father since I arrived at Paris. Every time I drew a bill I expected to find my credit revoked, but it was not so; and I therefore willingly concluded that Lausanne apprised him of everything, and that he thought fit not to interfere. I had never written to my father because I cannot dissemble; and, as my conduct ever since I quitted France had been one continued violation of his commands and wishes, why, correspondence was difficult, and could not prove pleasing. But Alcesté would talk about my father, and it was therefore necessary to think of him. She shuddered at the very name of Italy, and willingly looked forward to a settlement in the north. For myself, I was exceedingly happy, and my reminiscences of my fatherland were so far from agreeable that I was careless as to the future; and, although I already began to entertain the possibility of a return, I still wished to pass some considerable time of our youth inviolate by the vulgar cares of life, and under the influence of a glowing sky.

In the meantime we rambled about the mountains on our little, stout Candiote horses, or amused ourselves in adorning our residence. We made a new garden; we collected every choice flower, and rare bird, and beautiful animal that we could assemble together. Alcesté was wild for a white gazelle ever since we had seen one in the consul's court. They come from a particular part of Arabia, and are rare; yet one was obtained, and two of its fawn-coloured brethren. I must confess that we found these elegant and poetical companions extremely troublesome and stupid; they are the least sentimental and domestic of all creatures; the most sedulous attention will not attach them to you, and I do not believe that they

are ever fairly tame. I dislike them, in spite of their liquid eyes and romantic reputation, and infinitely prefer what are now my constant and ever delightful company, some fine, faithful, honest, intelligent, thorough-bred English dogs.

We had now passed nearly eight months in this island. The end of the year was again advancing. Oh! the happy, the charming evenings, when, fearing for my Alcesté that it grew too cool to walk, we sat within the house, and the large lamp was lit, and the faithful Lausanne brought me my pipe, and the confounded gazelle kicked it over, and the grinning Tita handed us our coffee, and my dear Alcesté sang me some delicious Venetian melody, and then I left off smoking, and she left off singing, and we were happier and happier every day.

Talk of fame and romance, all the glory and adventure in the world are not worth one single hour of domestic bliss. It sounds like a clap-trap, but the solitary splendour with which I am now surrounded tells me too earnestly it is truth.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Cruel Blow.

THE hour approached that was to increase my happiness, my incredible happiness. Blessed, infinitely blessed as I was, bountiful Heaven was about to shower upon me a new and fruitful joy. In a few days I was to become a father. We had obtained from the town all necessary attendance; an Italian physician, whose manner gave us confidence, and a sage woman of great reputation, were at our house. I had myself been cautious that my treasure should commit no imprudence. We were full of love and hope. My Alcesté was not quite well. The physician recommended great quiet. She was taking her siesta, and I stole from her side, because my presence ever excited her, and she could not slumber.

I strolled down to the bay and mused over the character of a father. My imagination dwelt only upon this idea. I discovered, as my reverie proceeded, the fine relations that must subsist between a parent and a child. Such thoughts had made no impression upon me before. I thought of my own father, and the tears stole down my cheek. I vowed to return to him immediately, and give ourselves up

to his happiness. I prayed to Heaven to grant me a man-child. I felt a lively confidence that he would be choicely gifted. I resolved to devote myself entirely to his education. My imagination wandered in dreams of his perfect character, of his high accomplishments, his noble virtues, his exalted fame. I conceived a philosopher who might influence his race, a being to whom the regeneration of his kind was perhaps allotted.

My thoughts had rendered me unconscious of the hour; the sun had set without my observation; the growing twilight called me to myself. I looked up; I beheld in the distance Alcesté. I was surprised, displeased, alarmed. I could not conceive anything more imprudent than her coming forth in the evening, and in her situation. I ran forward to reprimand her with a kiss, to fold her shawl more closely round her, and bear her in my arms to the house. I ran forward speaking at the same time. She faintly smiled. I reached her. Lo! she was not there! A moment before she was on the wide sands. There was no cavern near which she could have entered. I stood amazed, thunderstruck. I shouted 'Alcesté!'

The shout was answered. I ran back. Another shout; Tita came to me running. His agitated face struck me with awe. He could not speak. He seized my arm and dragged me along. I ran to the house. I did not dare to inquire the cause. Lausanne met me at the threshold. His countenance was despair. I started like a bewildered man; I rushed to her room. Yet, I remember the group leaning round her bed. They moved aside. I saw Alcesté. She did not see me. Her eyes were closed, her face pale and changed, her mouth had fallen.

'What,' I said, 'what is all this? Doctor, doctor, how is she?'

The physician shook his head.

I could not speak. I wrung my hands, more from the inability of thought and speech than grief, by which I was not influenced.

'Speak!' I at length said; 'is she dead?'

'My lord——'

'Speak, speak, speak!'

'It appears to me to be desperate.'

'It is impossible! Dead! She cannot be dead. Bleed her, bleed her, sir, before me. Dead! Did you say dead? It cannot be, Alcesté! Alcesté! speak to me. Say you are not dead, only say you are not dead. Bleed her, sir, bleed her.'

To humour me he took up his lancet and opened another vein. A few dull drops oozed out.

'Ah!' I exclaimed, 'see! she bleeds! She is not dead. Alcesté! you are not dead? Lausanne, do something, Lausanne. For God's sake, Lausanne, save her. Do something, Lausanne. My good Lausanne, do something!'

He affected to feel her pulse. I staggered about the room, wringing my hands.

'Is she better?' I inquired.

No one answered.

'Doctor, save her! Tell me she is better, and I give you half, my whole fortune.'

The poor physician shook his head. He attempted nothing. I rushed to Lausanne and seized his arm.

'Lausanne, I can trust to you. Tell me the truth. Is it all over?'

'It has too long been over.'

'Ah!' I waved my hands and fell.

CHAPTER XX.

The Curse of Venice.

WHEN my self-consciousness was restored, I found myself in another room. I was lying on a divan in the arms of Lausanne. I had forgotten everything. I called Alcesté. Then the remembrance rushed into my brain.

'Is it true?' I said; 'Lausanne, is it true?'

His silence was an answer. I rose and walked up and down the room once or twice, and then said in a low voice, 'Take me to her room, Lausanne.'

I leant upon his arm, and entered the chamber. Even as I entered, I indulged the wild hope that I should find it unoccupied. I could not believe it.

Tall candles were burning in the room; the walls were hung with solemn drapery. I advanced to the bedside, and took her hand. I motioned to Lausanne to retire. We were alone, alone once more. But how alone? I doubted of everything, even of my existence. I thought my heart would burst. I wondered why anything still went on, why was not all over? I looked round with idiot eyes and open

mouth. A horrid contortion was chiselled on my face.

Suddenly I seized the corpse in my arms and fiercely embraced it. I thought I could re-animate it. I felt so much, I thought I could re-animate it. I struggled with death. Was she dead? Was she really dead? It had a heavy, leaden feel. I let her drop from my arms. She dropped like a lifeless trunk. I looked round with a silly grin.

It was morning time. The flames of the candles looked haggard. There was a Turkish dagger in the closet. I remembered it, and ran to the closet. I cut off her long tresses, and rolled them round my neck. I locked the door, stole out of the window, and cunningly watched to observe whether I were followed. No one was stirring, or no one suspected me. I scudded away fleetly, and rushed up the hills without ever stopping. For hours I could never have stopped. I have a faint recollection of chasms, and precipices, and falling waters. I leapt everything, and found myself at length on a peak of Mount Ida.

A wide view of the ocean opened before me. As I gazed upon it, my mind became inflamed, the power of speech was restored to me, the poetry of my grief prevailed.

'Fatal ocean! fatal ocean!' I exclaimed; 'a curse upon thy waves, for thou waftedst us to death. Green hills! green valleys! a blight upon your trees and pastures, for she cannot gaze upon them! And thou, red sun! her blood is upon thy beams. Halt in thy course, red sun; halt! and receive my curse!

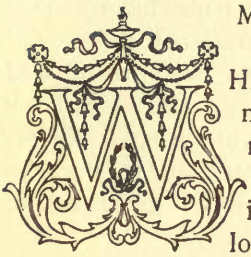
'Our house has fallen, the glorious house has fallen; and the little ones may now rise. Eagle! fly away, and tell my father he is avenged. For lo!

Venice has been my doom, and here, on this toppling crag, I seal all things, and thus devote Contarini Fleming to the infernal gods.'

I sprang forward. I felt myself in the air. My brain span round. My sight deserted me.

CHAPTER XXI.

Mother and Son.



HEN I again recall existence, I found myself in my own house. I was reclining on the divan, propped up by cushions. My left arm was in a sling: my head bandaged. I looked around me without thought, and then I relapsed into apathy. Lausanne was in the room, and passed before me. I observed him, but did not speak. He brought me refreshment, which I took without notice. The room was darkened. I knew nothing of the course of time, nor did I care or inquire. Sometimes Lausanne quitted the apartment, and then Tita took his place. Sometimes he returned, and changed my bandages and my dress, and I fell asleep. Awake I had no thought and slumbering I had no dreams.

I remained in this state, as I afterwards learnt, six weeks. One day, I looked up, and, seeing Tita, spoke in a faint voice, and asked for Lausanne. He ran immediately for him, and, while he was a moment absent, I rose from my couch and tore the curtain from the window. Lausanne entered, and came up to me, and would have again led me to my seat, but I bade him 'lighten the room.'

I desired to walk forth into the air, and, leaning on his arm, I came out of the house. It was early morn, and I believe the sense of the fresh air had attracted and revived me. I stood for a moment vacantly gazing upon the distant bay, but I was so faint that I could not stand, and Spiro, the little Greek boy, ran, and brought me a carpet and a cushion, and I sat down. I asked for a mirror, which was unwillingly afforded me; but I insisted upon it. I viewed, without emotion, my emaciated form, and my pallid sunken visage. My eyes were dead and hollow, my cheekbones prominent and sharp, my head shaven, and covered with a light turban. Nevertheless, the feeling of the free, sweet air, was grateful; and from this moment, I began gradually to recover.

I never spoke, unless to express my wants; but my appetite returned, my strength increased, and each day, with Lausanne's assistance, I walked for a short time in the garden. My arm, which had been broken, resumed its power; my head, which had been severely cut, healed. I ventured to walk only with the aid of a stick. Gradually, I extended my course, and, in time, I reached the sea-side. There, in a slight recess formed by a small head-land, I would sit with my back against a high rock, feel comforted that earth was hidden from my sight, and gaze for hours in vacancy upon the ocean and the sky. At sunset, I stole home. I found Lausanne always about, evidently expecting me. When he perceived me returning, he was soon by my side, but by a way that I could not observe him, and, without obtrusion or any appearance of officiousness, he led or rather carried me to my dwelling.

One morning, I bent my way to a small green valley, which opened on the other side of our gardens. It had been one of our favourite haunts. I know not why I resorted to it this morning, for, as yet, her idea had never crossed my mind any more than her name my lips. I had an indefinite conviction that I was a lost and fallen man. I knew that I had once been happy, that I had once mingled in a glorious existence; but I felt with regard to the past, as if it were another system of being, as if I had suddenly fallen from a star and lighted on a degenerate planet.

I was in our valley, our happy valley. I stood still, and my memory seemed to return. The tears stole down my face. I remembered the cluster of orange-trees under which we often sat. I plucked some leaves, and I pressed them to my lips. Yet I was doubtful, uncertain, incredulous. I scarcely knew who I was. Not indeed that I was unable to feel my identity; not indeed that my intelligence was absolutely incapable of fulfilling its office; but there seemed a compact between my body and my mind that existence should proceed without thought.

I descended into the vale. A new object attracted my attention. I approached it without suspicion. A green mound supported a stone, on which was boldly, but not rudely sculptured,

'ALCESTÉ, COUNTESS CONTARINI FLEMING.'

A date recorded her decease.

'It must have been many years ago,' was my first impression; 'I am Contarini Fleming, and I remember her. I remember Alcesté well, but not in

this country, surely not in this country. And yet those orange-trees ——

'My wife, my lost, my darling wife, oh! why am I alive? I thought that I was dead! I thought that I had flung myself from the mountain top to join you ——and it was all a dream!'

I threw myself upon the tomb, and my tears poured forth in torrents, and I tore up the flowers that flourished upon the turf, and kissed them, and tossed them in the air.

There was a rose, a beautiful white rose, delicate and fragrant; and I gathered it, and it seemed to me like Alcesté. And I sat gazing upon this fair flower, and, as my vision was fixed upon it, the past grew up before me, and each moment I more clearly comprehended it. The bitterness of my grief overcame me. I threw away the rose, and, a moment afterwards I was sorry to have lost it. I looked for it. It was not at my feet. My desire for the flower increased. I rose from the tomb, and looked around for the lost treasure. My search led me to the other side of the tablet, and I read the record of the death of my still-born son.

CHAPTER XXII.

A Memento of Happiness.

'WE MUST leave this place, Lausanne, and at once.'

His eye brightened when I spoke. 'I have seen all that you have done, Lausanne. It is well, very well. I owe you much. I would have given much for her hair, more than I can express. But you are not to blame. You had much to do.'

He left the room for a moment, and returned; returned with the long, the beautiful tresses of my beloved.

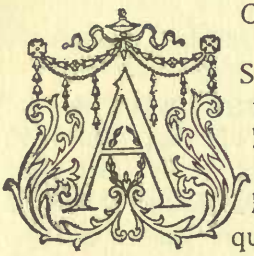
'You have made me happy. I never thought that I should again know what joy was. How considerate. How very good!'

He broke to me gently, that he had found the tresses around my neck. I rubbed my forehead, I summoned my scattered thoughts, 'I remember something,' I replied, 'but I thought it was a dream. I fancied that in a dream I had quitted the house.'

He told me all. He told me that, after a long search, he had found me among the mountains, hanging to the rough side of a precipice, shattered, stark, and senseless. The bushes had caught my clothes, and prevented a fatal fall.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Courage Reborn.



SHIP was about to leave the port for Leghorn. And why not go to Leghorn? Anywhere but Venice. Our arrangements were soon made. I determined to assent to the request of his father, in taking little Spiro, who was a favourite of Alcesté, and had charge of her gazelles. A Greek father is willing to see his son anywhere but among the Turks. I promised his family not only to charge myself with his future fortunes, but also to remit them an annual allowance through the consul, provided they cherished the tomb of their late mistress; and in a fortnight I was again on board.

The mountains of Candia were long in sight, but I avoided them. Our voyage was long, although not unpleasant. We were often becalmed. The air and change of scene benefited me much. I wonderfully resumed my old habits of reverie; and, as I paced the deck, which I did all day without ceasing, I mused over the past with feelings of greater solace than I ever expected to associate with it. I was consoled by the remembrance of our perfect love. I could not recall on either of our parts a single fretful word, a

single occasion on which our conduct had afforded either of us an anxious or even annoying moment. We never had enjoyed those lovers' quarrels which are said to be so sweet. Her sufferings had been intense, but they had been brief. It would have been consolatory to have received her last breath, yet my presence might have occasioned her greater agony. The appearance of her spirit assured me that, at the moment of departure her last thought was for me. The conviction of her having enjoyed positive happiness supported me. I was confident that, had it been possible to make the decision, she would not have yielded her brief and beautiful career for length of days unillumined by the presence of him, who remained to consecrate her memory by his enduring love, perhaps by his enduring page.

Ah! old feelings returned to me. I perceived that it was impossible to exist without some object, and fame and poetic creation offered themselves to my void heart. I remembered that the high calling to which I was devoted had been silently neglected. I recollected the lofty education and loftier results that travel was to afford, and for which travel was to prepare me. I reminded myself, that I had already proved many new passions, become acquainted with many new modifications of feeling, and viewed many new objects. My knowledge of man and nature was much increased. My mind was full of new thoughts, and crowded with new images.

As I thus mused, that separation of the mere individual from the universal poet, which ever occurred in these high communings, again took place. My own misfortunes seemed but petty incidents to one who could exercise an illimitable power over the pas-

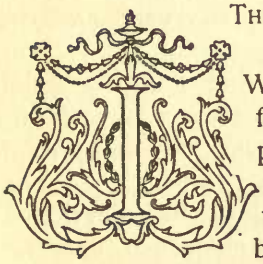
sions of his kind. If, amid the common losses of common life, the sympathy of a single friend can bear its balm, could I find no solace, even for my great bereavement, in the love of nations and the admiration of ages?

Thus reflecting, I suddenly dashed into invention; and, in my almost constant walks on deck, I poured forth a crowd of characters, and incidents, and feelings, and images, and moulded them into a coherent and, as I hoped, beautiful form. I longed for the moment when I could record them on a scroll more lasting than my memory; and, upheld by this great purpose, I entered, with a calm if not cheerful countenance, the famous port of Leghorn.

PART THE FOURTH.

CHAPTER I.

The Home of Art.



I WAS at length at Florence. The fair city, so much vaunted by poets, at first greatly disappointed me. I could not reconcile myself to those unfinished churches like barns, and those gloomy palaces like prisons. The muddy Arno was not poetical, and the site of the whole place, and the appearance of the surrounding hills, in spite of their white villas, seemed to me confined, monotonous, and dull. Yet there is a charm in Florence, which, although difficult precisely to define, is in its influence great and growing, and I scarcely know a place that I would prefer for a residence. I think it is the character of Art which, both from ancient associations and its present possessions, is forcibly impressed upon this city. It is full of invention. You cannot stroll fifty yards, you cannot enter a church or palace, without being favorably reminded of the power of human thought. It is a famous memorial of the genius of the Italian middle

ages, when the mind of man was in one of its spring tides, and in which we mark so frequently what at the present day we too much underrate, the influence of individual character.

In Florence the monuments are not only of great men, but of the greatest. You do not gaze upon the tomb of an author who is merely a great master of composition, but of one who formed the language. The illustrious astronomer is not the discoverer of a planet, but the revealer of the whole celestial machinery. The artist and the politician are not merely the first sculptors and statesmen of their time, but the inventors of the very art and the very craft in which they excelled.

In the study of the Fine Arts they mutually assist each other. In the formation of style I have been, perhaps, as much indebted to music and to painting as to the great masters of literary composition. The contemplation of the Venetian school had developed in me a latent love of gorgeous eloquence, dazzling incident, brilliant expression, and voluptuous sentiment. These brought their attendant imperfections: exaggeration, effeminacy, the obtrusion of art, the painful want of nature. The severe simplicity of the Tuscan masters chastened my mind. I mused over a great effect produced almost by a single mean. The picture that fixed my attention, by a single group illustrating a single passion, was a fine and profitable study. I felt the power of Nature delineated by a great master, and how far from necessary to enforce her influence were the splendid accessories with which my meditated compositions would rather have encumbered than adorned her. I began to think more of the individual than the species, rather of the motives

of man than of his conduct. I endeavoured to make myself as perfect in the dissection of his mind as the Florentine in the anatomy of his body. Attempting to acquire the excellence of my models, I should probably have imbibed their defects, their stiff, and sombre, and arid manner, their want of variety and grace. The Roman school saved me from this, and taught me that a chaste or severe conception might be treated in a glowing or genial style. But, after all, I prefer the Spanish to the Italian painters. I know no one to rival Murillo, I know no one who has blended with such felicity the high ideal with the extreme simplicity of nature. Later in life I found myself in his native city, in that lovely Seville, more lovely from his fine creations than even from the orange bowers that perfume its gales, and the silver stream that winds about its plain.

I well remember the tumult of invention in which I wandered day after day amid the halls and galleries of Florence. Each beautiful face that flitted before me was a heroine, each passion that breathed upon the canvas was to be transferred to the page. I conceived at one time the plan of writing a series of works in the style of each school. The splendour of Titian, the grace of Raffaelle, the twilight tints of that magician, Guercino, alternately threw my mind into moods analogous to their creations. A portrait in the Pitti palace of Ippolyto de' Medici, of whom I knew nothing, haunted me like a ghost, and I could only lay the spectre by resolving in time to delineate the spirit of Italian Feodality. The seraphic Baptist in the wilderness recalled the solitude I loved. I would have poured forth a monologue amid the mountains of Judæa, had not Endymion caught my enraptured

vision, and I could dream only of the bright goddess of his shadowy love.

I thought only of art; and sought the society of artists and collectors. I unconsciously adopted their jargon; and began to discourse of copies, and middle tints, and changes of style. I was in great danger of degenerating into a dilettante. Little objects, as well as great, now interested me. I handled a bronze, and speculated upon its antiquity. Yet even these slight pursuits exercised a beneficial tendency upon a mind wild, irregular, and undisciplined; nor do I believe that any one can long observe even fine carvings and choice medals without his taste becoming more susceptible, and delicate, and refined.

My mind was overflowing with the accumulated meditation and experience of two years, an important interval in all lives, passed in mine in constant thought and action and in a continual struggle with new ideas and novel passions. The desire of composition became irresistible, I recurred to the feelings with which I had entered Leghorn, and from which I had been diverted amid the distraction produced by the novelty, the beauty, and the the variety of surrounding objects. With these feelings I quitted the city, and engaged the Villa Capponi, situate on a green and gentle swell of the Apennines, near the tower of Galileo.

CHAPTER II.

My Second Novel.

IF THERE were anything in the world for which I now entertained a sovereign contempt, it was my unfortunate 'Manstein.' My most malignant critic must have yielded to me in the scorn which I lavished on that immature production, and the shame with which I even recollected its existence. No one could be more sensible of its glaring defects, for no one thought more of them, and I was so familiar with its less defective parts that they had lost all their relish, and appeared to me as weak, and vapid, and silly as the rest. I never labour to delude myself; and never gloss over my own faults. I exaggerate them; for I can afford to face truth, because I feel capable of improvement. And, indeed, I have never yet experienced that complacency with which, it is said, some authors regard their offspring; nor do I think that this paternal fondness will ever be my agreeable lot. I am never satisfied. No sooner have I executed some conception than my mind soars above its creation, and meditates a higher flight in a purer atmosphere. The very exercise of power only teaches me that it may be wielded for a greater purpose.

I prepared myself for composition in a very different mood from that in which I had poured forth my fervid crudities in the garden house. Calm and collected, I constructed characters on philosophical principles, and mused over a chain of action which should develop the system of our existence. All was art. I studied contrasts and grouping, and metaphysical analysis was substituted for anatomical delineation. I was not satisfied that the conduct of my creations should be influenced merely by the general principles of their being. I resolved that they should be the very impersonations of the moods and passions of our mind. One was ill-regulated will; another offered the formation of a moral being; materialism sparkled in the wild gaiety and reckless caprice of one voluptuous girl, while spirit was vindicated in the deep devotion of a constant and enthusiastic heroine. Even the lighter temperaments were not forgotten. Frivolity smiled, and shrugged his shoulders before us, and there was even a deep personification of cynic humour.

Had I executed my work in strict unison with my plan, it would, doubtless, have been a dull affair; for I did not yet possess sufficient knowledge of human nature to support me in such a creation: nor was I then habituated to those metaphysical speculations which, in some degree, might have compensated by their profundity for their want of entertainment. But Nature avenged herself, and extricated me from my dilemma.

I began to write; my fancy fired, my brain inflamed; breathing forms rose up under my pen, and jostled aside the cold abstractions, whose creation had cost such long musing. In vain I endeavoured to compose without enthusiasm; in vain I endeavoured

to delineate only what I had preconceived; in vain I struggled to restrain the flow of unbidden invention. All that I had seen and pondered passed before me, from the proud moment that I stood upon Mount Jura to the present ravishing hour that I returned to my long-estranged art. Every tree, every cloud, every star and mountain, every fair lake and flowing river, that had fed my fancy with their sweet suggestions in my rambling hours, now returned and illumined my pages with their brightness and their beauty. My mind teemed with similes. Thought and passion came veiled in metaphoric garb. I was delighted; I was bewildered. The clustering of their beauty seemed an evidence of poetic power; the management of these bright guests was an art of which I was ignorant. I received them all; and found myself often writing only that they might be accommodated.

I gave up to this work many long and unbroken hours; for I was determined that it should not suffer from a hurried pen. I often stopped to meditate. It was in writing this book that I first learnt my art. It was a series of experiments. They were at length finished, and my volumes consigned to their fate, and northern publisher.

The critics treated me with more courtesy. What seemed to me odd enough then, although no puzzle now, was, that they admired what had been written in haste and without premeditation, and generally disapproved of what had cost me much forethought, and been executed with great care. It was universally declared a most unequal work, and they were right, although they could not detect the causes of the inequality. My perpetual efforts at being imag-

inative were highly reprobated. Now my efforts had been entirely the other way. In short, I puzzled them, and no one offered a prediction as to my future career. My book, as a whole, was rather unintelligible, but parts were favourites. It was pronounced a remarkable compound of originality and dulness. These critiques, whatever might be their tenor, mattered little to me. A long interval elapsed before they reached Florence, and during that period I had effectually emancipated myself from the thraldom of criticism.

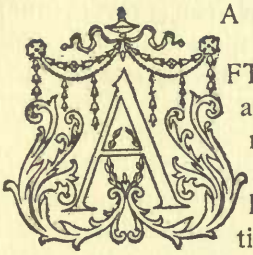
I have observed that, after writing a book, my mind always makes a great spring. I believe that the act of composition produces the same invigorating effect upon the mind which some exertion does upon the body. Even the writing of 'Manstein' produced a revolution in my nature, which cannot be traced by any metaphysical analysis. In the course of a few days, I was converted from a worldling into a philosopher. I was indeed ignorant, but I had lost the double ignorance of the Platonists; I was no longer ignorant that I was ignorant. No one could be influenced by a greater desire of knowledge, a greater passion for the beautiful, or a deeper regard for his fellow-creatures. And I well remember when, on the evening that I wrote the last sentence of this more intellectual effort, I walked out upon the terrace with that feeling of satisfaction which accompanies the idea of a task completed. So far was I from being excited by the hope of having written a great work, that I even meditated its destruction; for the moment it was terminated, it seemed to me that I had become suddenly acquainted with the long-concealed principles of my art, which, without doubt, had been slenderly

practised in this production. My taste, as it were in an instant, became formed; and I felt convinced I could now produce some lasting creation.

I thought no more of criticism. The breath of man has never influenced me much, for I depend more upon myself than upon others. I want no false fame. It would be no delight to me to be considered a prophet, were I conscious of being an impostor. I ever wish to be undeceived; but if I possess the organisation of a poet, no one can prevent me from exercising my faculty, any more than he can rob the courser of his fleetness, or the nightingale of her song.

CHAPTER III.

A Literary Resumé.



FTER finishing my work, I read more at Florence than I have at any period of my life. Having formed the principles on which, in future, I intended to proceed in composition, and considering myself now qualified to decide upon other artists, I determined critically to examine the literary fiction of all countries, to ascertain how far my intentions had been anticipated, and in what degree my predecessors might assist me.

It appears to me that the age of versification has passed. The mode of composition must ever be greatly determined by the manner in which the composition can be made public. In ancient days the voice was the medium by which we became acquainted with the inventions of a poet. In such a method, where those who listened had no time to pause, and no opportunity to think, it was necnecessary that everything should be obvious. The audience who were perplexed would soon become wearied. The spirit of ancient poetry, therefore, is rather material than metaphysical, superficial,

not internal. There is much simplicity and much nature, but little passion, and less philosophy. To obviate the baldness, which is the consequence of a style where the subject and the sentiments are rather intimated than developed, the poem was enriched by music and enforced by action. Occasionally were added the enchantment of scenery and the fascination of the dance. But the poet did not depend merely upon these brilliant accessories. He resolved that his thoughts should be expressed in a manner different from other modes of communicating ideas. He caught a suggestion from his sister art, and invented metre. And in this modulation he introduced a new system of phraseology, which marked him out from the crowd, and which has obtained the title of 'poetic diction.'

His object in this system of words was to heighten his meaning by strange phrases and unusual constructions. Inversion was invented to clothe a commonplace with an air of novelty; vague epithets were introduced to prop up a monotonous modulation. Were his meaning to be enforced, he shrank from wearisome ratiocination and the agony of precise conceptions, and sought refuge in a bold personification, or a beautiful similitude. The art of poetry was, to express natural feelings in unnatural language.

Institutions ever survive their purpose, and customs govern us when their cause is extinct. And this mode of communicating poetic invention still remained, when the advanced civilisation of man, in multiplying manuscripts, might have made many suspect that the time had arrived when the poet was to cease to sing, and to learn to write. Had the splendid refinement of Imperial Rome not been

doomed to such rapid decay, and such mortifying and degrading vicissitudes, I believe that versification would have worn out. Unquestionably that empire, in its multifarious population, scenery, creeds, and customs, offered the richest materials for emancipated fiction; materials, however, far too vast and various for the limited capacity of metrical celebration.

That beneficent Omnipotence, before which we must bow down, has so ordered it, that imitation should be the mental feature of modern Europe; and has ordained that we should adopt a Syrian religion, a Grecian literature, and a Roman law. At the revival of letters, we beheld the portentous spectacle of national poets communicating their inventions in an exotic form. Conscious of the confined nature of their method, yet unable to extricate themselves from its fatal ties, they sought variety in increased artifice of diction, and substituted the barbaric clash of rhyme for the melody of the lyre.

A revolution took place in the mode of communicating thought. Now, at least, it was full time that we should have emancipated ourselves for ever from sterile metre. One would have supposed that the poet who could not only write, but even print his inventions, would have felt that it was both useless and unfit that they should be communicated by a process invented when his only medium was simple recitation. One would have supposed that the poet would have rushed with desire to the new world before him, that he would have seized the new means which permitted him to revel in a universe of boundless invention; to combine the highest ideal creation with the infinite delineation of teeming Nature; to unravel all the dark mysteries of our bosoms and all the bright

purposes of our being; to become the great instructor and champion of his species; and not only delight their fancy, and charm their senses, and command their will, but demonstrate their rights, illustrate their necessities, and expound the object of their existence; and all this too in a style charming and changing with its universal theme, now tender, now sportive; now earnest, now profound; now sublime, now pathetic; and substituting for the dull monotony of metre the most various, and exquisite, and inexhaustible melody.

When I remember the trammels to which the poet has been doomed, and the splendour with which consummate genius has invested him, and when, for a moment, I conceive him bursting asunder his bonds, I fancy that I behold the sacred bird snapping the golden chain that binds him to Olympus, and soaring even above Jove!

CHAPTER IV.

Strange Symptoms.

I HAD arrived at Florence in a feeble and shattered state of health, of which, as I had never been an habitual invalid, I thought little. My confidence in my energy had never deserted me. Composition, however, although I now wrote with facility, proved a greater effort than I had anticipated. The desire I felt of completing my purpose had successfully sustained me throughout, but, during its progress, I was too often conscious of an occasional but increasing languor, which perplexed and alarmed me. Perfect as might be my conception of my task, and easy as I ever found its execution when I was excited, I invariably experienced, at the commencement, a feeling of inertness, which was painful and mortifying. As I did not dream of physical inability, I began to apprehend that, however delightful might be the process of meditation, that of execution was less delicious. Sometimes I even for a moment feared that there might be a lurking weakness in my nature, which might prevent me from ever effecting a great performance.

I remember one evening as I was meditating in my chamber, my watch lying on the table, and the hour nine, I felt, as I fancied, disturbed by the increased sound of that instrument. I moved it to the other side of the table, but the sound increased, and, assured that it was not occasioned by the supposed cause, and greatly disturbed, I rang for Lausanne, and mentioned the inconvenience. Lausanne persisted in hearing nothing, but, as the sound became even more audible, and as I now believed that some reptile might be in the room, he examined it in all parts. Nothing was perceived; the hum grew louder, and it was not until I jumped up from my seat to assist him in his examination, that I discovered, by the increased sound occasioned by my sudden rise, that the noise was merely in my own ears. The circumstance occasioned me no alarm. It inconvenienced me for the evening. I retired at an earlier hour, passed, as usual, a restless and dreamy night, but fell asleep towards the morning, and rose tolerably fresh.

I can write only in the morning. It is then I execute with facility all that I have planned the preceding eve. And this day, as usual, I resumed my pen, but it was not obedient. I felt not only languid and indolent, but a sensation of faintness, which I had before experienced and disregarded, came over me, and the pen fell from my hand. I rose and walked about the room. My extremities were cold, as of late in the morning I had usually found them. The sun was shining brightly over the sparkling hills. I felt a great desire to warm myself in his beams. I ordered my horse.

The ride entirely revived me. I fancied that I led perhaps too sedentary a life. I determined that, as

soon as my book was finished, I would indulge in more relaxation. I returned home with a better appetite than usual, for, since my return from Candia, I had almost entirely lost my relish for food and my power of digestion. In the evening I was again busied in musing over the scene which was to be painted on the coming morn. Suddenly I heard again the strange noise. I looked at my watch. It was exactly nine o'clock. The noise increased rapidly. From the tick of a watch it assumed the loud confused moaning of a bell tolling in a storm, like the bell I had heard at the foot of the Alps. It was impossible to think. I walked about the room. It became louder and louder. It seemed to be absolutely deafening. I could compare it to nothing but the continuous roar of a cataract. I sat down, and looked around me in blank despair.

Night brought me no relief. My sleep, ever since the death of Alcesté, had been troubled and broken, and of late had daily grown less certain and less refreshing. Often have I lain awake the whole night, and usually have risen exhausted and spiritless. So it was on this morning. Cold, faint, and feeble, the principle of life seemed to wax fainter and fainter. I sent for my faithful companion. 'Lausanne,' I said, 'I begin to think that I am very ill.'

Lausanne felt my pulse, and shook his head. 'There is no wonder,' he replied. 'You have scarcely any circulation. You want stimulants. You should drink more wine, and give up writing for a time. Shall I send for a physician?'

I had no confidence in medicine. I resolved to exert myself; Lausanne's advice, I fancied, sounded well. I drank some wine, and felt better; but as I

never can write under any inspiration but my own, I resolved to throw aside my pen and visit Pisa for a fortnight, where I could follow his prescription, with the additional advantage of change of scene.

My visit to Pisa benefited me. I returned, and gave the last finish to my work.

CHAPTER V.

New Plans.

ALL THE Italian cities are delightful; but an elegant melancholy pervades Pisa that is enchanting. What a marble group is formed by the Cathedral, the wonderful Baptistry, the Leaning Tower, and the Campo Santo; and what an indication of the ancient splendour of the Republic! I wish that the world consisted of a cluster of small States. There would be much more genius, and, what is of more importance, much more felicity. Federal Unions would preserve us from the evil consequences of local jealousy, and might combine in some general legislation of universal benefit. Italy might then revive, and even England may regret that she has lost her Heptarchy.

In the Campo Santo you trace the history of Art. There, too, which has not been observed, you may discover the origin of the arabesques of Raffaelle. The Leaning Tower is a stumbling-block to architectural antiquarians. An ancient fresco in the Campo proves the intention of the artist. All are acquainted with the towers of Bologna: few are aware that, in Saragossa, the Spaniards possess a rival of the architectural caprice of the Pisans.

To this agreeable and silent city I again returned, and wandered in meditation, amid the stillness of its palaces. I consider this the period of my life in which whatever intellectual power I possess became fully developed. All that I can execute hereafter is but the performance of what I then planned; nor would a patriarchal term of life permit me to achieve all that I then meditated. I looked forward to the immediate fulfilment of my long hopes, to the achievement of a work which might last with its language, and the attainment of a great and permanent fame.

I was now meditating over this performance. It is my habit to contrive in my head the complete work before I have recourse to the pen which is to execute it. I do not think that meditation can be too long, or execution too rapid. It is not merely characters and the general conduct of the story that I thus prepare, but the connection of every incident, often whole conversations, sometimes even slight phrases. A very tenacious memory, which I have never weakened by having recourse to other modes of reminiscence, supports me in this process; which, however, I should confess, is a painful and exhausting effort.

I revolved this work in my mind for several months without ever having recourse to paper. It was never out of my consciousness. I fell asleep musing over it: in the morning my thoughts clustered immediately upon it, like bees on a bed of unexhausted flowers. In my rides, during my meals, in my conversations on common topics, I was indeed, the whole time, musing over this creation.

The profound thinker always suspects that he is superficial. Patience is a necessary ingredient of genius. Nothing is more fatal than to be seduced

into composition by the first flutter of the imagination. This is the cause of so many weak and unequal works, of so many worthy ideas thrown away, and so many good purposes marred. Yet there is a bound to meditation; there is a moment when further judgment is useless. There is a moment when a heavenly light rises over the dim world you have been so long creating, and bathes it with life and beauty. Accept this omen that your work is good, and revel in the sunshine of composition.

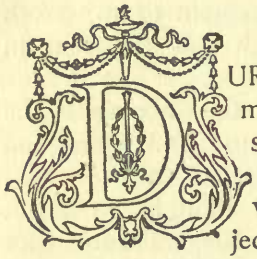
I have sometimes half believed, although the suspicion is mortifying, that there is only a step between his state who deeply indulges in imaginative meditation, and insanity; for I well remember that at this period of my life, when I indulged in meditation to a degree that would now be impossible, and I hope unnecessary, my senses have sometimes appeared to be wandering. I cannot describe the peculiar feeling I then experienced, for I have failed in so doing to several eminent surgeons and men of science with whom I have conversed respecting it, and who were curious to become acquainted with its nature; but I think it was, that I was not always assured of my identity, or even existence; for I sometimes found it necessary to shout aloud to be sure that I lived; and I was in the habit, very often at night, of taking down a volume and looking into it for my name, to be convinced that I had not been dreaming of myself. At these times there was an incredible acuteness, or intenseness, in my sensations; every object seemed animated, and, as it were, acting upon me. The only way that I can devise to express my general feeling is, that I seemed to be sensible of the rapid whirl of the globe.

All this time my health was again giving way, and all my old symptoms were gradually returning. I set them at defiance. The nocturnal demon having now come back in all its fulness, I was forced to confine my meditations to the morning; and in the evening I fled for refuge and forgetfulness to wine. This gave me temporary relief, but destroyed my remaining power of digestion. In the morning I sometimes fainted as I dressed; still I would not give in, and only postponed the commencement of my work until my return to Florence, which was to occur in a few days.

I rode the journey through the luxuriant Val d'Arno, attended by Tita. Lausanne and Spiro had returned the previous day. It was late in the evening when I arrived at the villa. I thought, as I got off my horse, that the Falls of Niagara could not overpower the infernal roaring that I alone heard. I entered and threw myself on a sofa. It came at last. What it was I knew not. It felt like a rushing of blood into my brain. I moaned, threw out my arms, and wildly caught at the bell. Lausanne entered, and I was lying apparently lifeless.

CHAPTER VI.

A Lost Year.



URING the whole course of my life my brain had been my constant source of consolation. So long as I could work that machine, I was never entirely without an object and a pleasure. I had laughed at physical weaknesses while that remained untouched; and unquestionably I should have sunk under the great calamity of my life, had it not been for the sources of hope and solace which this faithful companion opened to me. Now it was all over: I was little better than an idiot.

Physician followed physician, and surgeon, surgeon, without benefit. They all held different opinions; yet none were right. They satirised each other in private interviews, and exchanged compliments in consultations. One told me to be quiet; another, to exert myself: one declared that I must be stimulated; another, that I must be soothed. I was, in turn, to be ever on horseback, and ever on a sofa. I was bled, blistered, boiled, starved, poisoned, electrified; galvanised; and at the end of a year found myself with exactly the same oppression on my brain, and

the additional gratification of remembering that twelve months of existence had worn away without producing a single idea. Such are the inevitable consequences of consulting men who decide by precedents which have no resemblance, and never busy themselves about the idiosyncrasy of their patients.

I had been so overwhelmed by my malady, and so conscious that upon my cure my only chance of happiness depended, that I had submitted myself to all this treatment without a murmur, and religiously observed all their contradictory directions. Being of a sanguine temperament, I believed every assertion, and every week expected to find myself cured. When, however, a considerable period of time had elapsed without any amelioration, I began to rebel against these systems, which induced so much exertion and privation, and were productive of no good. I was quite desperate of cure; and each day I felt more keenly that, if I were not cured, I could not live. I wished, therefore, to die unmolested. I discharged all my medical attendants, and laid myself down like a sick lion in his lair.

I never went out of the house, and barely out of a single room. I scarcely ever spoke, and only for my wants. I had no acquaintance, and I took care that I should see no one. I observed a strict diet, but fed every day. Although air, and medicine, and exercise were to have been productive of so much benefit to me, I found myself, without their assistance, certainly not worse; and the repose of my present system, if possible, rendered my wretched existence less burdensome.

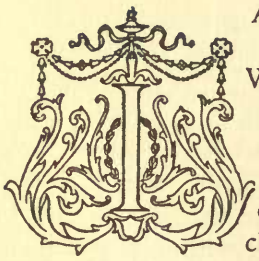
Lausanne afterwards told me that he supposed I had relapsed into the state in which I fell immediately

after my great calamity; but this was not the case. I never lost my mind or memory: I was conscious of everything; I forgot nothing; but I had lost the desire of exercising them. I sat in moody silence, revolving in reverie, without the labour of thought, my past life and feelings.

I had no hopes of recovery. It was not death that terrified me, but the idea that I might live, and for years, in this helpless and unprofitable condition. When I contrasted my recent lust of fame, and plans of glory, and indomitable will, with my present woeful situation of mysterious imbecility, I was appalled with the marvellous contrast; and I believed that I had been stricken by some celestial influence for my pride and wanton self-sufficiency.

CHAPTER VII.

An Old Friend.



WAS in this gloomy state when, one morning, Lausanne entered my room; I did not notice him, but continued sitting, with my eyes fixed on the ground, and my chin upon my breast. At last he said, 'My lord, I wish to speak to you.'

'Well!'

'There is a stranger at the gate, a gentleman, who desires to see you.'

'You know I see no one,' I replied, rather harshly.

'I know it, and have so said; but this gentleman——'

'Good God! Lausanne. Is it my father?'

'No; but it is one who may perhaps come from him.'

'I will see him.'

The door opened, and there entered Winter.

Long years, long and active years, had passed since we parted.

All had happened since. I thought of my boyhood, and it seemed innocent and happy, compared with the misery of the past and present. Nine years had not much altered my friend; but me——

'I fear, Count,' said Winter, 'that I am abusing the privilege of an old friend in thus insisting upon an entrance; but I heard of your residence in this country, and your illness at the same time, and, being at Florence, I thought you would perhaps pardon me.'

'You are one of the few persons whom I am glad to see under all circumstances, even under those in which I now exist.'

'I have heard of your distressing state.'

'Say my hopeless state. But let us not converse about it. Let us speak of yourself. Let me hope you are as happy as you are celebrated.'

'As for that, well enough. But if we are to talk about celebrity, let me claim the honours of a prophet, and congratulate a poet whom I predicted.'

'Alas! my dear Winter,' I said, with a faint smile, 'talk not of that, for I shall die without doing you honour.'

'There is no one of my acquaintance who has less chance of dying.'

'How so?' I remarked, rather quickly; for when a man really believes he is dying, he does not like to lose the interest which such a situation produces. 'If you knew all——'

'I know all; much more, too, than your physician who told me.'

'And you believe, then, that I cannot look forward even to death to terminate this miserable existence?'

'I do not consider it miserable; and therefore I should be sorry if there were anything to warrant such an anticipation.'

'And I can assure you, Chevalier,' and I spoke sincerely and solemnly, 'that I consider existence, on

the terms I now possess it, an intolerable burden. And nothing but the chance, for I cannot call it hope, of amelioration, prevents me from terminating it.'

'If you remember right, you considered existence equally an intolerable burden when, as a boy, you first experienced feelings which you were unable to express.'

'Well! what inference do you draw?'

'That it is not the first time you have quarrelled with Nature!'

'How so?' I eagerly replied, and I exerted myself to answer him. 'Is disease Nature?'

'Is your state disease?'

'I have no mind.'

'You reason.'

'My brain is affected.'

'You see.'

'You believe, then, that I am an hypochondriac?'

'By no means! I believe that your feelings are real and peculiar; but it does not therefore follow that they are evil.'

'Perhaps,' I said, with a dry smile, 'you believe them beneficent?'

'I do certainly,' he replied.

'In what respect?'

'I believe that, as you would not give Nature a holiday she is giving herself one.'

I was silent, and mused. 'But this infernal brain,' I replied.

'Is the part of the machinery that you have worked most; and therefore the weakest.'

'But how is it to be strengthened?'

'Not by medicine. By following exactly a contrary course to that which enfeebled it.'

'For fifteen months an idea has not crossed my brain.'

'Well! you are all the better for it; and fifteen months more——'

'Alas! what is life! At this age I hoped to be famous.'

'Depend upon it you are in the right road; but rest assured you must go through every trial that is peculiar to men of your organisation. There is no avoiding it. It is just as necessary as that life should be the consequence of your structure. To tell the truth, which is always best, I only came here to please your father. When he wrote to me of your illness, I mentioned to him that it must have its course; that there was nothing to be alarmed about, and that it was just as much a part of your necessary education as travel or study. But he wished me to see you, and so I came.'

'My poor father! Alas! my conduct to him——'

'Has been just what it ought to be, just what it necessarily must have been, just exactly what my own was to my father. As long as human beings are unphilosophically educated, these incidents will take place.'

'Ah! my dear Winter, I am a villain. I have never even written to him.'

'Of course you have not. Your father tried to turn you into a politician. Had he not forced you to write so many letters then, you would not have omitted to write to him now. The whole affair is simple as day. Until men are educated with reference to their nature, there will be no end to domestic fracas.'

'You ever jest, my friend. I have not ventured on a joke for many a long month.'

'Which is a pity; for, to tell you the truth, although your last work is of the tender and sublime, and maketh fair eyes weep, I think your forte is comic.'

'Do you indeed?'

'Ah! my dear Contarini, those two little volumes of "Manstein" ——'

'Oh! mention not the name. Infamous unadulterated trash!'

'Ah! exactly as I thought of my first picture, which, after all, has a freshness and a freedom I have never excelled. But "Manstein," my dear Contarini, it certainly was very impertinent. I read it at Rome. I thought I should have died. All our friends. So very true.'

'Will you stay with me? I feel better since you have been here; and what you tell me of my father delights me. Pray stay. Well! you are indeed kind. And if I feel very ill, I will keep away.'

'O! I should like to see you in one of your fits.'

CHAPTER VIII.

A Friend's Advice.

'TAKE a glass of wine,' said Winter, at dinner.

'My dear friend, I have taken one.'

'Take another. Here is your father's health.'

'Well then, here is yours. How is the finest of old men?'

'Flourishing and happy.'

'And your mother?'

'Capital!'

'And you have never returned?'

'No! and never will, while there are such places as Rome and Naples.'

'Ah! I shall never see them.'

'Pooh! the sooner you move about, the better.'

'My good friend, it is impossible.'

'Why so? Do not confound your present condition with the state you were in a year ago. Let me feel your pulse. Capital! You seem to have an excellent appetite. Don't be ashamed to eat. In cases like yours, the art is to ascertain the moment to make exertion. I look upon yours as a case of complete exhaustion. If there be anything more exhaust-

ing than love, it is sorrow; and if there be anything more exhausting than sorrow, it is poetry. You have tried all three. Your body and your mind both require perfect repose. I perceive that your body has sufficiently rested. Employ it; and in another year you will find your mind equally come round.'

'You console me. But where shall I go? Home?'

'By no means; you require beauty and novelty. At present I would not go even to the south of this country. It will remind you too much of the past. Put yourself entirely in a new world. Go to Egypt. It will suit you. I look upon you as an Oriental. If you like, go to South America. Tropical scenery will astonish and cure you. Go to Leghorn, and get into the first ship that is bound for a country with which you are unacquainted.'

CHAPTER IX.

Off for Spain.

WINTER remained with me several days, and before he had quitted Florence I had written to my father. I described to him my forlorn situation, my strong desire to see him, and I stated the advice which did not correspond with my wishes. I asked for his counsel, but said nothing of the great calamity. I was indeed myself extremely unwilling to return home in my present state, but this unwillingness I concealed.

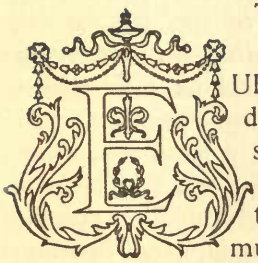
I received an answer from my father by a special courier, an answer the most affectionate. He strongly recommended me to travel for some time; expressed his hope and confidence that I should entirely recover, and that I should return and repay him for all his anxiety. All that he required was, that I should frequently correspond with him. And, ever afterwards, I religiously respected his request.

A ship was about to sail from Leghorn to Cadiz. Spain appeared an interesting country, and one of which I knew nothing. It is the link between Europe and Africa. To Spain, therefore, I resolved to repair; and in a few days I again quitted Italy, and once more cast my fortunes on the waters!

PART THE FIFTH.

CHAPTER I.

The Alhambra.



UROPE and Africa! I have wandered amid the tombs of Troy, and stood by the altar of Medea, yet the poetry of the Hellespont and the splendour of the Symplegades must yield to the majesty of the Straits of Calpe.

Like some lone Titan, lurid and sublime, his throne the mountains, and the clouds his crown, the melancholy Mauritania sits apart, and gazes on the mistress he has lost.

And lo! from out the waves, that kiss her feet and bow before her beauty, she softly rises with a wanton smile. Would she call back her dark-eyed lover, and does the memory of that bright embrace yet dwell within the hallowed sanctuary of her heart?

It was a glorious union. When were maidens fairer and more faithful? when were men more gentle and more brave? When did all that can adorn humanity more brightly flourish, and more sweetly bloom? Alas for their fair cities, and fine gardens,

and fresh fountains! Alas for their delicate palaces, and glowing bowers of perfumed shade!

Will you fly with me from the dull toil of vulgar life? Will you wander for a moment amid the plains of Granada? Around us are those snowy and purple mountains, which a Caliph wept to quit. They surround a land still prodigal of fruits, in spite of a Gothic government. You are gazing on the rows of blooming aloes, that are the only enclosures, with their flowery forms high in the warm air; you linger among those groves of Indian fig; you stare with strange delight at the first sight of the sugar-cane. Come away, come away, for on yon green and sunny hill, rises the ruby gate of that precious pile, whose name is a spell and whose vision is romance.

Let us enter Alhambra!

See! here is the Court of Myrtles, and I gather you a sprig. Mark how exquisitely everything is proportioned; mark how slight, and small, and delicate! And now we are in the Court of Columns, the far-famed Court of Columns. Let us enter the chambers that open round this quadrangle. How beautiful are their deeply-carved and purple roofs, studded with gold, and the walls entirely covered with the most fanciful fretwork, relieved with that violet tint which must have been copied from their Andalusian skies. Here you may sit in the coolest shade, reclining on your divan, with your beads or pipe, and view the dazzling sunlight in the court, which assuredly must scorch the flowers, if the faithful lions ever ceased from pouring forth that element, which you must travel in Spain or Africa to honour. How many chambers! the Hall of the Ambassadors ever the most sumptuous. How fanciful its mosaic ceiling of ivory

and tortoise-shell, mother-of-pearl and gold! And then the Hall of Justice with its cedar roof, and the Harem, and the baths: all perfect. Not a single roof has yielded, thanks to those elegant horseshoe arches and those crowds of marble columns, with their oriental capitals. What a scene! Is it beautiful? Oh! conceive it in the time of the Boabdils; conceive it with all its costly decorations, all the gilding, all the imperial purple, all the violet relief, all the scarlet borders, all the glittering inscriptions and precious mosaics, burnished, bright, and fresh. Conceive it full of still greater ornaments, the living groups, with their splendid and vivid and picturesque costume, and, above all, their rich and shining arms, some standing in conversing groups, some smoking in sedate silence, some telling their beads, some squatting round a storier. Then the bustle and the rush, and the coming horsemen, all in motion, and all glancing in the most brilliant sun.

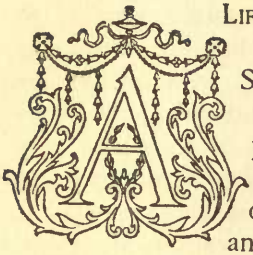
Enough of this! I am alone. Yet there was one being with whom I could have loved to roam in these imaginative halls, and found no solitude in the role presence of her most sweet society.

Alhambra is a strong illustration of what I have long thought, that however there may be a standard of taste, there is no standard of style. I must place Alhambra with the Parthenon, the Pantheon, the Cathedral of Seville, the temple of Dendera. They are different combinations of the same principles of taste. Thus we may equally admire Æschylus, Virgil, Calderon, and Ferdousi. There never could have been a controversy on such a point, if mankind had not confused the ideas of taste and style. The Saracenic architecture is the most inventive and fanciful, but at

the same time the most fitting and delicate that can be conceived. There would be no doubt about its title to be considered among the finest inventions of man, if it were better known. It is only to be found, in any degree of European perfection, in Spain. Some of the tombs of the Mamlouk Sultans in the desert round Cairo, wrongly styled by the French 'the tombs of the Caliphs,' are equal, I think, to Alhambra. When a person sneers at the Saracenic, ask him what he has seen. Perhaps a barbarous, although picturesque, building, called the Ducal Palace at Venice. What should we think of a man who decided on the architecture of Agrippa by the buildings of Justinian, or judged the age of Pericles by the restorations of Hadrian? Yet he would not commit so great a blunder. There is a Moorish palace, the Alcazar, at Seville, a huge mosque at Cordova turned into a Cathedral, with partial alteration, Alhambra at Granada; these are the great specimens in Europe, and sufficient for all study. There is a shrine and a chapel of a Moorish saint at Cordova, quite untouched, with the blue mosaic and the golden honeycomb roof, as vivid and as brilliant as when the Santon was worshipped. I have never seen any work of art so exquisite. The materials are the richest, the ornaments the most costly, and in detail the most elegant and the most novel, the most fanciful and the most flowing, that I ever contemplated. And yet nothing at the same time can be conceived more just than the proportion of the whole, and more mellowed than the blending of the parts, which indeed Palladio could not excel.

CHAPTER II.

Life in Sunny Spain.



SPANISH city sparkling in the sun, with its white walls and verdant jalousies, is one of the most cheerful and most brilliant of the works of man. Figaro is in every street, and Rosina in every balcony.

The Moorish remains, the Christian churches, the gay national dress, a gorgeous priesthood, ever producing, in their dazzling processions and sacred festivals, an effect upon the business of the day; the splendid pictures of a school of which we know nothing; theatres, alamedas, tertullas, bull-fights, boleros; here is matter enough for amusement within the walls: and now let us see how they pass their time out of them.

When I was in the south of Spain the whole of Andalusia was overrun with robbers. These bands, unless irritated by a rash resistance, have of late seldom committed personal violence, but only lay you on the ground and clear out your pockets. If, however, you have less than an ounce of gold, they shoot you. That is their tariff, which they have announced at all the principal towns, and it must be confessed, a

light one. A weak government resolves society into its original elements, and robbery in Spain has become more honourable than war, inasmuch as the robber is paid, and the soldier is in arrear. The traveller must defend himself. Some combine, some compromise. Merchants travel in corsarios or caravans well-armed; persons of quality take a military escort, who, if cavalry, scamper off the moment they are attacked, and, if infantry, remain and participate in the plunder. The government is only anxious about the post, and to secure that pay the brigands blackmail.

The country is thinly populated, with few villages or farm-houses, but many towns and cities. It chiefly consists of vast plains of pasture-land, which, sunburnt in the summer, were a good preparation for the desert, and intervening mountainous districts, such as the Sierra Morena, famous in Cervantes, the Sierra Nevada of Granada, and the Sierra da Ronda, a country like the Abruzzi, entirely inhabited by brigands and smugglers, and which I once explored. I must say that the wild beauty of the scenery entirely repaid me for some peril and great hardship. Returning from this district towards Cadiz you arrive at Oven, one of the finest mountain-passes in the world. Its precipices and cork woods would have afforded inexhaustible studies to Salvator. All this part of the country is full of picture, and of a peculiar character. I recommend Castellar to an adventurous artist.

I travelled over Andalusia on horseback, and, in spite of many warnings, without any escort, or any companions but Lausanne and Tita, and little Spiro and the muleteers, who walk and occasionally increase the burden of a sumpter steed. In general, like all the Spanish peasants, they are tall, finely-made fel-

lows, looking extremely martial, with their low, round, black velvet hats, and coloured sashes, embroidered jackets, and brilliant buttons. We took care not to have too much money, and no baggage that we could not stow in our saddle-bags. I even followed the advice of an experienced guide, and was as little ostentatious as possible of my arms; for to a Spanish bandit foreign pistols are sometimes a temptation instead of a terror. Such prudent humility will not, however, answer in the East, where you cannot be too well or too magnificently armed.

We were, in general, in our saddles at four o'clock, and stopped, on account of the heat, from ten till five in the evening, and then proceeded for three or four hours more. I have travelled through three successive nights, and seen the sun set and rise without quitting my saddle, which all men cannot say. It is impossible to conceive anything more brilliant than an Andalusian summer moon. You lose nothing of the landscape, which is only softened, not obscured; and absolutely the beams are warm. Generally speaking, we contrived to reach, for our night's bivouac, some village which usually boasts a posada. If this failed there was sometimes a convent; and were we unfortunate in this expedient, we made pillows of our saddles and beds of our cloaks. A posada is, in fact, a khan, and a very bad one. The same room holds the cattle, the kitchen, the family, and boards and mats for travellers to sleep on. Your host affords no provisions, and you must cater as you proceed; and, what is more, cook when you have catered. Yet the posada, in spite of so many causes, is seldom dirty; for the Spaniards, notwithstanding their reputation, I claim the character of the most

cleanly nation in Europe. Nothing is more remarkable than the delicacy of the lower orders. All that frequent whitewash and constant ablution can effect against a generating sun they employ. You would think that a Spanish woman had no other occupation than to maintain the cleanliness of her chamber. They have, indeed, too much self-respect not to be clean. I once remember Lausanne rating a muleteer, who was somewhat tardy in his preparations. 'What!' exclaimed the peasant reproachfully, 'would you have me go without a clean shirt?' Now, when we remember that this man only put on his clean shirt to toil on foot for thirty or forty miles, we may admire his high feeling, and doubt whether we might match this incident even by that wonder, an English postilion.

Certainly the Spaniards are a noble race. They are kind and faithful, courageous and honest, with a profound mind, that will nevertheless break into rich humour, and a dignity which, like their passion, is perhaps the legacy of their oriental sires.

But see! we have gained the summit of the hill. Behold! the noble range of the Morena mountains extends before us, and at their base is a plain worthy of such a boundary. Yon river, winding amid bowers of orange, is the beautiful Guadalquivir; and that city, with its many spires and mighty mosque, is the famous Cordova!

CHAPTER III.

The Lady From Madrid.

HE court-yard was full of mules, a body of infantry were bivouacking under the colonnades. There were several servants, all armed, and a crowd of muleteers with bludgeons. ''Tis a great lady from Madrid, sir,' observed Tita, who was lounging in the court.

I had now been several days at Cordova, and intended to depart at sunset for Granada. The country between these two cities is more infested by brigands than any tract in Spain. The town rang with their daring exploits. Every traveller during the last month had been plundered; and, only the night before my arrival, they had, in revenge for some attempt of the governor to interefere, burned down a farm-house a few miles without the gates.

When I entered the hotel, the landlord came up to me and advised me to postpone my departure for a few hours, as a great lady from Madrid was about to venture the journey, and depart at midnight towards Malaga with a strong escort. He doubted not that she would consent with pleasure to my joining their party. I did not feel, I fear, as grateful for

his proposition as I ought to have been. I was tired of Cordova; I had made up my mind to depart at a particular hour. I had hitherto escaped the brigands; I began to suspect that their activity was exaggerated. At the worst, I apprehended no great evil. Some persons always escaped, and I was confident in my fortune.

'What is all this?' I inquired of Lausanne.

''Tis a great lady from Madrid,' replied Lausanne.

'And have you seen her?'

'I have not, sir; but I have seen her husband.'

'Oh! she has a husband; then I certainly will not stop. At sunset we go.'

In half an hour's time the landlord again entered my room, with an invitation from the great lady and her lord to join them at dinner. Of course I could not refuse, although I began to suspect that my worthy host, in his considerate suggestions, had perhaps been influenced by other views than merely my security.

I repaired to the saloon. It was truly a Gil Blas scene. The grandee in an undress uniform, and highly imposing in appearance, greeted me with dignity. He was of middle age, with a fine form and a strongly-marked, true Castilian countenance, but handsome. The señora was exceedingly young, and really very pretty, with infinite vivacity and grace. A French valet leant over the husband's chair; and a duenna, broad and supercilious, with beady jet eyes, mahogany complexion, and cocked-up nose, stood by her young mistress, refreshing her with a huge fan.

After some general and agreeable conversation, the señor introduced the intended journey; and, understanding that I was about to proceed in the same di-

rection, offered me the advantage of his escort. The dama most energetically impressed upon me the danger of travelling alone, and I was brutal enough to suspect that she had more confidence in foreign aid than in the courage of her countrymen.

I was in one of those ungallant fits that sometimes come over men of shattered nerves. I had looked forward with moody pleasure to a silent moonlit ride. I shrunk from the constant effort of continued conversation. It did not appear that my chivalry would be grievously affected, if an almost solitary cavalier were to desert a dame environed by a military force and a band of armed retainers. In short, I was not seduced by the prospect of security, and rash enough to depart alone.

The moon rose. I confess our anxiety. The muleteer prophesied an attack. 'They will be out,' said he, 'for the great lady; we cannot escape.' We passed two travelling friars on their mules, who gave us their blessing, and I observed to-night by the roadside more crosses than usual, and each of these is indicative of a violent death. We crossed an immense plain, and entered a mule track through uneven ground. We were challenged by a picquet, and I, who was ahead, nearly got shot for answering. It was a corsario of armed merchants returning from the fair of Ronda. We stopped and made inquiries, but could learn nothing, and we continued our journey for several hours, in silence, by the most brilliant moon. We began to hope we had escaped, when suddenly a muleteer informed us that he could distinguish a trampling of horses in the distance. Ave, Maria! A cold perspiration came over us. Decidedly they approached. We drew up out of pure

fear. I had a pistol in one hand and a purse in the other, to act according to circumstances. The band were clearly in sight. I was encouraged by finding that they were a rather uproarious crew. They turned out to be a company of actors travelling to Cordova. There were dresses and decorations, scenery and machinery, all on mules and donkeys: the singers rehearsing an opera, the principal tragedian riding on an ass, and the buffo most serious, looking as grave as night, with a cigar, and in greater agitation than all the rest. The women were in side-saddles like sedans, and there were whole panniers of children. Some of the actresses were chanting an ave, while, in more than one instance, their waists were encircled by the brawny arm of a more robust devotee. All this irresistibly reminded me of Cervantes.

Night waned, and, instead of meeting robbers, we discovered that we had only lost our way. At length we stumbled upon some peasants sleeping in the field amid the harvest, who told us that it was utterly impossible to regain our road, and so, our steeds and ourselves being equally wearied, we dismounted and turned our saddles into pillows.

I was roused after a couple of hours' sound slumber, by the rosario, a singing procession, in which the peasantry congregate to their labours. It is most effective, full of noble chants, and melodious responses, that break upon the still, fresh air and your fresher feelings, in a manner truly magical. This is the country for a national novelist. The out-door life of the natives induces a variety of most picturesque manners, while their semi-civilisation makes each district retain, with barbarous jealousy, its peculiar customs.

I heard a shot at no great distance. It was repeated. To horse, to horse! I roused Lausanne and Tita. It struck me immediately that shots were interchanged. We galloped in the direction of the sound, followed by several peasants, and firing our pistols. Two or three runaway soldiers met us. 'Carraho! Scoundrels, turn back!' we cried. In a few minutes we were in sight of combat. It was a most unequal one, and nearly finished. A robber had hold of the arm of the great lady of Madrid, who was dismounted, and seated on a bank. Her husband was leaning on his sword, and evidently agreeing to a capitulation. The servant seemed still disposed to fight. Two or three wounded men were lying on the field, soldiers, and mules, and muleteers, running about in all directions.

Tita, who was an admirable shot, fired the moment he was in reach, and brought down his man. I ran up to the lady, but not in time to despatch her assailant, who fled. The robbers, surprised, disorderly, and plundering, made no fight, and we permitted them to retreat with some severe loss.

In the midst of exclamations and confusion, Lausanne produced order. The infantry rallied, the mules re-assembled, the baggage was again arranged. The travellers were the Marquis and Marchioness of Santiago, who were about to pay a visit to their relative, the Governor of Malaga. I remained with them until we reached Granada, when the most dangerous portion of this journey was completed, and I parted from these charming persons with a promise to visit them on my arrival at their place of destination.

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